



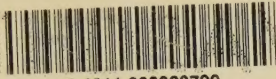
DESCRIBED BY GREAT WRITERS

ESTHER SINGLETON

ИЗДАНИЕ

CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY

DG674.S6 C001 V  
VENICE AS SEEN AND DESCRIBED BY FAM



3 4211 000023790


W

N



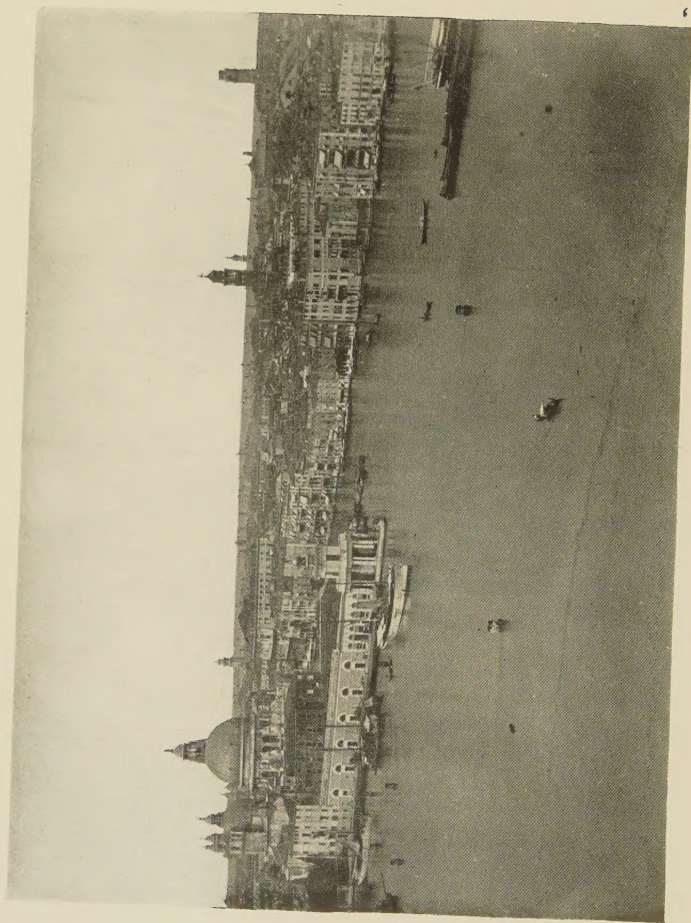


# VENICE



Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2024





VIEW OF VENICE



# VENICE

*As Seen and Described*  
by Famous Writers

*Edited and Translated by*  
ESTHER SINGLETON

*Author of "Turrets, Towers and Temples,"  
"Great Pictures," and "A Guide to the  
Opera," and translator of "The Music  
Dramas of Richard Wagner"*

WITH NUMEROUS ILLUSTRATIONS

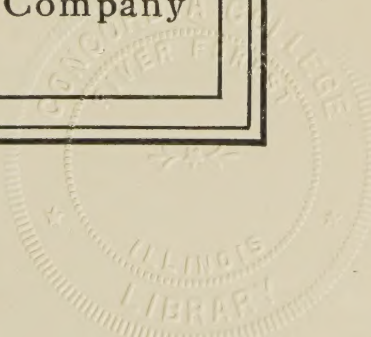
---



---

New York  
Dodd, Mead and Company

1905



Copyright, 1905,  
BY  
DODD, MEAD & COMPANY

*Published March*



## *PREFACE*

This book consists of a collection of impressions, essays and criticisms by sympathetic travellers, historians and artists, gathered together to give a general impression of the half-submerged "Queen of the Adriatic." We are prepared for the peculiar charm of the fantastic floating city of dreams by Dickens's prose-poem which shows the spirit with which Venice should be visited and studied; for the Venice of to-day, with her fallen Campanile, her filled-up canals, and her modern life is entirely ignored in these pages, where only the picturesque and individual phases of the city are presented.

The historical articles by Grant Allen on the Origins of Venice and by Ruskin on Torcello, which open and close the book, emphasize the antiquity of the "City of the Lagoons" and her simple beginnings. The growth of the Republic is clearly set forth by Green, and her power and magnificence are described in the course of various essays, notably those on The Doge and The Arsenal. The first two historical articles prepare us for our trip through Venice, before taking which, Ruskin gives a general view of the ocean-city, "set like a golden clasp on the girdle of the earth," reflecting its marble palaces upon that "green pavement" which every breeze breaks "into new fantasies of rich tessellation," or standing at ebb-tide upon its flat plain of dark green seaweed.

## PREFACE

As in my similar books on *London* and *Paris*, I have followed a general plan of topographical arrangement. Therefore, we begin with a general view of the Lagoons and the "Outer Rim" from which we catch a distant glimpse of Venice. We then enter a gondola and float along the Grand Canal with Gautier to point out its array of palaces and monuments of fame, beauty and historical interest, pausing to learn from Molmenti of the luxurious interiors of the Patriarch's Palaces in their prime. Santa Maria della Salute, The Rialto, the Ca' d'Oro and the Fondachi claim our attention until we land and ascend the Campanile, with Henry Havard to aid us in recognising the chief buildings at our feet and the misty blue mountain peaks in the far distance. After this bird's-eye view of luminous Venice, framed by her lagoons, we enter St. Mark's to study its architecture, sculptures and mosaics, and next stop to enjoy the Piazza and learn the significance of its famous columns. The Ducal Palace then claims our interest, without and within. Our travels through the city are now interrupted by the examination of some masterpieces of Venetian painting, described by Taine; after which, we again enter our gondola to visit some of the churches of especial note, wells and squares, and side-canals, which happily for us are not yet filled up. We enjoy a few afternoon excursions to islands from Chioggia on the south to Torcello on the north,—and thus our visit ends.

In the meantime, we have noted some of the industries of old Venice, and some of her ancient customs; such as the coronation of the Doge, and his wedding of the Adriatic in



## PREFACE

vii

the Bucentaur. We have learned about the Gondoliers and their *Traghetti*, and enjoyed the gay life of the Piazza and Riva de' Schiavoni, and individual types of Venetians upon the Rialto and at Chioggia. We have seen the "Queen of the Adriatic" under some of her most peculiar as well as enchanting aspects; for instance, during her season of Carnival and festival of All Souls' Day; we have seen her during spring, summer, autumn and winter; in all the loveliness of dawn, sunset and night; when the fierce sirocco is approaching, and when floods inundate the city.

It must be remembered that such a rapid tour cannot be complete; therefore, all that I have endeavored to do within the limited space at my disposal, has been to preserve the impressions and present the descriptions that the traveller best cares to retain.

E. S.

NEW YORK, *February, 1905.*



# CONTENTS

---

	PAGE
An Italian Dream . . . . .	1
<i>Charles Dickens</i>	
Origin of Venice . . . . .	13
<i>Grant Allen</i>	
Venice and Rome . . . . .	25
<i>John Richard Green</i>	
The City of the Lagoons . . . . .	34
<i>John Ruskin</i>	
The Lagoons . . . . .	45
<i>Horatio F. Brown</i>	
The Gondola . . . . .	52
<i>Théophile Gautier</i>	
The Outer Rim . . . . .	55
<i>William Sharp</i>	
The Traghetto . . . . .	64
<i>Horatio F. Brown</i>	
The Grand Canal . . . . .	74
<i>Théophile Gautier</i>	
The Patricians' Palaces . . . . .	85
<i>P. Molmenti</i>	
Santa Maria della Salute . . . . .	91
<i>John Ruskin</i>	
The Rialto . . . . .	94
<i>Charles Yriarte</i>	
The Ca' d'Oro . . . . .	99
<i>Max Doumic</i>	
The Fondaco dei Turchi and The Fondaco dei Tedeschi . . . . .	104
<i>Charles Yriarte</i>	
View from the Campanile . . . . .	113
<i>Henry Harvard</i>	

## CONTENTS

	PAGE
St. Mark's . . . . .	119
<i>John Ruskin</i>	
The Sculptures on the Façade of St. Mark's . . . . .	131
<i>Jean Paul Richter</i>	
The Mosaics of Venice . . . . .	144
<i>William B. Scott</i>	
The Piazza . . . . .	151
<i>Henry Perl</i>	
The Doves of St. Mark's . . . . .	163
<i>Horatio F. Brown</i>	
The Columns of the Piazzetta . . . . .	167
<i>John Ruskin</i>	
The Ducal Palace . . . . .	178
<i>John Ruskin</i>	
Interior of the Ducal Palace . . . . .	192
<i>Théophile Gautier</i>	
The Carnival . . . . .	202
<i>Charles Yriarte</i>	
Riva degli Schiavoni . . . . .	206
<i>Julia Cartwright</i>	
By Side Canals . . . . .	211
<i>Linda Villari</i>	
Some Churches of Venice . . . . .	217
<i>Henry Perl</i>	
All Souls' Day . . . . .	224
<i>Horatio F. Brown</i>	
Canals, Wells and Squares . . . . .	229
<i>Julia Cartwright</i>	
Summer in Venice . . . . .	235
<i>Linda Villari</i>	
Night in Venice . . . . .	243
<i>John Addington Symonds</i>	
The Arsenal . . . . .	246
<i>Charles Yriarte</i>	
The Doge . . . . .	255
<i>William Carew Hazlitt</i>	



# CONTENTS

xi

PAGE

Tombs of the Doges . . . . .	262
<i>Hippolyte Adolphe Taine</i>	
Wealth and Industries of Old Venice . . . . .	272
<i>William B. Scott</i>	
The Brides of Venice . . . . .	278
<i>John Ruskin</i>	
Seasons in Venice . . . . .	287
<i>Julia Cartwright</i>	
Venetian Painting . . . . .	292
<i>Hippolyte Adolphe Taine</i>	
Venice and Tintoretto . . . . .	305
<i>John Richard Green</i>	
Floods in the City . . . . .	314
<i>Horatio F. Brown</i>	
Venetian Melancholy . . . . .	319
<i>John Addington Symonds</i>	
Afternoon Excursions (San Lazzaro, Malamocco — Fusina — The Lido) . . . . .	330
<i>John Addington Symonds</i>	
Chioggia . . . . .	338
<i>Henry Ecroyd</i>	
Murano . . . . .	343
<i>John Ruskin</i>	
St. Francis in the Desert . . . . .	356
<i>Linda Villari</i>	
Torcello . . . . .	362
<i>John Ruskin</i>	



## ILLUSTRATIONS

---

View of Venice . . . . .	<i>Frontispiece</i>	
Bridge of Sighs . . . . .	<i>Facing Page</i>	8
Palazzo Dario . . . . .	" "	14
Torcello . . . . .	" "	26
View of Venice . . . . .	" "	34
Grand Canal . . . . .	" "	52
Canal in Torcello . . . . .	" "	56
Grand Canal from the Salute . . . . .	" "	74
Palazzo Loredan . . . . .	" "	86
Santa Maria della Salute . . . . .	" "	92
The Rialto . . . . .	" "	94
The Ca' D'Oro . . . . .	" "	100
The Fondaco dei Turchi . . . . .	" "	104
View from the Campanile . . . . .	" "	114
St. Mark's . . . . .	" "	120
Southern Façade of St. Mark's . . . . .	" "	132
Interior of St. Mark's . . . . .	" "	144
The Doves of St. Mark's . . . . .	" "	164
The Columns of the Piazzetta . . . . .	" "	168
The Ducal Palace . . . . .	" "	178
The Ducal Palace . . . . .	" "	192
Piazzetta with Corner of Doge's Palace . . . . .	" "	202
Riva degli Schiavoni . . . . .	" "	206
Sanudo Vanaxel Canal . . . . .	" "	212
Church of S. Zaccaria . . . . .	" "	218
Church of Il Santissimo Redentore . . . . .	" "	224
S. Maria della Misericordia: Dock . . . . .	" "	230

The Lido Baths . . . . .	<i>Facing Page</i>	236
Island of S. Giorgio Maggiore . . . . .	" "	244
The Arsenal . . . . .	" "	246
Palazzo Venezia-Murano . . . . .	" "	256
Statue of Colleoni . . . . .	" "	262
Bronze Horses of St. Mark's . . . . .	" "	272
Grand Canal Showing Vendramini: Ca- lergi Palace . . . . .	" "	278
Rio Albrizzi . . . . .	" "	288
Bacchus and Ariadne . . . . .	" "	292
Rape of Europa . . . . .	" "	302
Palazzo Giustiniani Vescovi . . . . .	" "	306
Lido: View of S. Maria Elisabetta . . . . .	" "	330
Fish Market in Venice . . . . .	" "	338
San Donato, Italy . . . . .	" "	344
Santa Fosca, Torcello . . . . .	" "	356
Interior of Santa Fosca, Torcello . . . . .	" "	362



## *AN ITALIAN DREAM*

*CHARLES DICKENS*

I HAD been travelling for some days; resting very little in the night, and never in the day. The rapid and unbroken succession of novelties that had passed before me came back like half-formed dreams; and a crowd of objects wandered in the greatest confusion through my mind, as I travelled on by a solitary road. At intervals, some one among them would stop, as it were, in its restless flitting to and fro, and enable me to look at it quite steadily, and behold it in full distinctness. After a few moments it would dissolve, like a view in a magic lantern; and while I saw some part of it quite plainly, and some faintly, and some not at all, would show me another of the many places I had lately seen, lingering behind it, and coming through it. This was no sooner visible than, in its turn, it melted into something else.

At one moment I was standing again before the brown old rugged churches of Modena. As I recognised the curious pillars with grim monsters for their bases, I seemed to see them, standing by themselves, in the quiet square at Padua, where there were the staid old University, and the figures demurely gowned, grouped here and there in the open space about it. Then, I was strolling in the outskirts of that pleasant city, admiring the unusual neatness of the dwelling-houses, gardens, and orchards, as I had seen them a few hours

before. In their stead arose, immediately, the two towers of Bologna; and the most obstinate of all these objects failed to hold its ground a minute, before the monstrous moated castle of Ferrara, which, like an illustration to a wild romance, came back again in the red sunrise, lording it over the solitary, grass-grown, withered town. In short, I had that incoherent, but delightful jumble in my brain, which travellers are apt to have, and are indolently willing to encourage. Every shake of the coach in which I sat, half dozing, in the dark, appeared to jerk some new recollection out of its place, and to jerk some other new recollection into it; and in this state I fell asleep.

I was awakened after sometime (as I thought) by the stopping of the coach. It was now quite night, and we were at the waterside. There lay here a black boat, with a little house or cabin in it of the same mournful colour. When I had taken my seat in this, the boat was paddled, by two men, toward a great light lying in the distance on the sea.

Ever and again there was a dismal sigh of wind. It ruffled the water, and rocked the boat, and sent the dark clouds flying before the stars. I could not but think how strange it was to be floating away at that hour: leaving the land behind, and going toward this light upon the sea. It soon began to burn brighter; and, from being one light, became a cluster of tapers, twinkling and shining out of the water, as the boat approached toward them by a dreamy kind of track, marked out upon the sea by posts and piles.

We had floated on, five miles or so, over the dark water,

when I heard it rippling, in my dream, against some obstruction near at hand. Looking out attentively, I saw, through the gloom, a something black and massive—like a shore, but lying close and flat upon the water, like a raft—which we were gliding past. The chief of the two rowers said it was a burial-place.

Full of the interest and wonder which a cemetery lying out there, in the lonely sea, inspired, I turned to gaze upon it as it should recede in our path, when it was quickly shut out from my view. Before I knew by what, or how, I found that we were gliding up a street—a phantom street; the houses rising on both sides from the water, and the black boat gliding on beneath their windows. Lights were shining from some of these casements, plumbing the depth of the black stream with their reflected rays; but all was profoundly silent.

So we advanced into this ghostly city, continuing to hold our course through narrow streets and lanes, all filled and flowing with water. Some of the corners where our way branched off were so acute and narrow, that it seemed impossible for the long, slender boat to turn them; but the rowers, with a low, melodious cry of warning, sent it skimming on without a pause. Sometimes the rowers of another black boat like our own echoed the cry, and, slackening their speed (as I thought we did ours), would come flitting past us, like a dark shadow. Other boats, of the same sombre hue, were lying moored, I thought, to painted pillars, near to dark, mysterious doors that opened straight upon the water.

Some of these were empty; in some the rowers lay asleep; toward one I saw some figures coming down a gloomy archway from the interior of a palace: gaily dressed, and attended by torch-bearers. It was but a glimpse I had of them; for a bridge so low and close upon the boat that it seemed ready to fall down and crush us: one of the many bridges that perplexed the Dream: blotted them out instantly. On we went, floating toward the heart of this strange place—with water all about us where never water was elsewhere—clusters of houses, churches, heaps of stately buildings growing out of it—and, everywhere, the same extraordinary silence. Presently, we shot across a broad and open stream; and passing, as I thought, before a spacious paved quay where the bright lamps with which it was illuminated showed long rows of arches and pillars, of ponderous construction and great strength, but as light to the eye as garlands of hoar frost or gossamer—and where, for the first time, I saw people walking—arrived at a flight of steps leading from the water to a large mansion, where, having passed through corridors and galleries innumerable, I lay down to rest; listening to the black boats stealing up and down below the window on the rippling water till I fell asleep.

The glory of the day that broke upon me in this Dream; its freshness, motion, buoyancy; its sparkles of the sun in water; its clear blue sky and rustling air; no waking words can tell. But, from my window, I looked down on boats and barques; on masts, sails, cordage, flags; on groups of busy

sailors working at the cargoes of these vessels; on wide quays strewn with bales, casks, merchandise of many kinds; on great ships lying near at hand in stately indolence; on islands crowned with gorgeous domes and turrets; and where golden crosses glittered in the light, atop of wondrous churches springing from the sea! Going down upon the margin of the green sea, rolling on before the door, and filling all the streets, I came upon a place of such surpassing beauty, and such grandeur, that all the rest was poor and faded, in comparison with its absorbing loveliness.

It was a great Piazza, as I thought; anchored, like all the rest, in the deep ocean. On its broad bosom was a Palace, more majestic and magnificent in its old age than all the buildings of the earth, in the high prime and fulness of their youth. Cloisters and galleries: so light, they might have been the work of fairy hands; so strong, that centuries had battered them in vain; wound round and round this palace, and enfolded it with a Cathedral, gorgeous in the wild luxuriant fancies of the East. At no great distance from its porch, a lofty tower standing by itself, and rearing its proud head, alone, into the sky, looked out upon the Adriatic Sea. Near to the margin of the stream were two ill-omened pillars of red granite; one having on its top a figure with a sword and shield; the other, a winged lion. Not far from these, again, a second tower: richest of the rich in all its decorations: even here, where all was rich: sustained aloft a great orb, gleaming with gold and deepest blue: the Twelve Signs painted on it, and a mimic sun revolving in its course around

them: while above, two bronze giants hammered out the hours upon a sounding bell. An oblong square of lofty houses of the whitest stone, surrounded by a light and beautiful arcade, formed part of this enchanted scene: and, here, and there, gay masts for flags rose, tapering from the pavement of the unsubstantial ground.

I thought I entered the Cathedral, and went in and out among its many arches; traversing its whole extent. A grand and dreamy structure, of immense proportions; golden with old mosaics; redolent of perfumes; dim with the smoke of incense; costly in treasure of precious stones and metals, glittering through iron bars; holy with the bodies of deceased saints; rainbow-hued with windows of stained glass; dark with carved woods and coloured marbles; obscure in its vast heights and lengthened distance; shining with silver lamps and winking lights; unreal, fantastic, solemn, inconceivable throughout. I thought I entered the old palace; pacing silent galleries and council-chambers, where the old rulers of this mistress of the waters looked sternly out, in pictures, from the walls, and where her high-prowed galleys, still victorious on canvas, fought and conquered as of old. I thought I wandered through its halls of state and triumph—bare and empty now!—and musing on its pride and might, extinct: for that was past; all past; heard a voice say, “Some tokens of its ancient rule, and some consoling reasons for its downfall, may be traced here yet!”

I dreamed that I was led on, then, into some jealous rooms, communicating with a prison near the palace; separated from

it by a lofty bridge, crossing a narrow street; and called, I dreamed, *The Bridge of Sighs*.

But first I passed two jagged slits in a stone wall; the lions' mouths—now toothless—where, in the distempered horror of my sleep, I thought denunciations of innocent men to the old wicked Council had been dropped through, many a time, when the night was dark. So, when I saw the council-room to which such prisoners were taken for examination, and the door by which they passed out when they were condemned—a door that never closed upon a man with life and hope before him—my heart appeared to die within me.

It was smitten harder though, when, torch in hand, I descended from the cheerful day into two ranges, one below another, of dismal, awful, horrible stone cells. They were quite dark. Each had a loophole in its massive wall, where, in the old time, every day, a torch was placed—I dreamed—to light the prisoner within for half an hour. The captives, by the glimmering of these brief rays had scratched and cut inscriptions in the blackened vaults. I saw them. For their labour with a rusty nail's point had outlived their agony and them, through many generations.

One cell I saw, in which no man remained for more than four-and-twenty hours; being marked for dead before he entered it. Hard by, another, and a dismal one, whereto, at midnight, the confessor came—a monk brown-robed, and hooded—ghastly in the day, and free bright air, but, in the midnight of that murky prison, *Hope's* extinguisher, and *Murder's* herald. I had my foot upon the spot where, at the



same dread hour, the shriven prisoner was strangled; and struck my hand upon the guilty door—low-browed and stealthy—through which the lumpish sack was carried out into a boat, and rowed away, and drowned where it was death to cast a net.

Around this dungeon stronghold, and above some part of it: licking the rough walls without, and smearing them with damp and slime within; stuffing dank weeds and refuse into chinks and crevices, as if the very stones and bars had mouths to stop; furnishing a smooth road for the removal of the bodies of the secret victims of the state—a road so ready that it went along with them, and ran before them like a cruel officer—flowed the same water that filled this Dream of mine, and made it seem one, even at the time.

Descending from the palace by a staircase, called, I thought, the Giant's—I had some imaginary recollection of an old man abdicating, coming, more slowly and more feebly, down it, when he heard the bell proclaiming his successor—I glided off, in one of the dark boats, until we came to an old arsenal guarded by four marble lions. To make my Dream more monstrous and unlikely, one of these had words and sentences upon its body, inscribed there at an unknown time, and in an unknown language; that their purport was a mystery to all men.

There was little sound of hammers in this place for building ships, and little work in progress; for the greatness of the city was no more, as I have said. Indeed, it seemed a very wreck found drifting on the sea; a strange flag hoisted



BRIDGE OF SIGHTS



in its honourable stations, and strangers standing at its helm. A splendid barge, in which its ancient chief had gone forth, pompously, at certain periods, to wed the ocean, lay here, I thought, no more; but, in its place, there was a tiny model made from recollection like the city's greatness; and it told of what had been (so are the strong and weak confounded in the dust) almost as eloquently as the massive pillars, arches, roofs, reared to overshadow stately ships that had no other shadow now, upon the water or the earth.

An armoury was there yet. Plundered and despoiled; but an armoury. With a fierce standard taken from the Turks, drooping in the dull air of its cage. Rich suits of mail worn by great warriors were hoarded there; crossbows and bolts; quivers full of arrows; spears; swords, daggers, maces, shields, and heavy-headed axes. Plates of wrought steel and iron, to make the gallant horse a monster cased in metal scales; and one spring weapon (easy to be carried in the breast) designed to do its office noiselessly, and made for shooting men with poisoned darts.

One press or case I saw full of accursed instruments of torture: horribly contrived to cramp, and pinch, and grind, and crush men's bones, and tear and twist them with the torment of a thousand deaths. Before it were two iron helmets, with breast-pieces; made to close up tight and smooth upon the heads of living sufferers; and fastened on to each was a small knob or anvil, where the directing devil could repose his elbow at his ease, and listen, near the walled-up ear, to the lamentations and confessions of the wretch within.

There was that grim resemblance in them to the human shape—they were such moulds of sweating faces, pained and cramped—that it was difficult to think them empty; and terrible distortions lingering within them seemed to follow me, when, taking to my boat again, I rowed off to a kind of garden or public walk in the sea, where there were grass and trees. But I forgot them when I stood upon its furthest brink—I stood there in my dream—and looked, along the ripple, to the setting sun; before me, in the sky and on the deep, a crimson flush; and behind me the whole city resolving into streaks of red and purple on the water.

In the luxurious wonder of so rare a dream, I took but little heed of time, and had but little understanding of its flight. But there were days and nights in it; and when the sun was high and when the rays of lamps were crooked in the running water, I was still afloat, I thought; plashing the slippery walls and houses with the cleavings of the tide, as my black boat, borne upon it, skimmed along the streets.

Sometimes alighting at the doors of churches and vast palaces, I wandered on, from room to room, from aisle to aisle, through labyrinths of rich altars, ancient monuments; decayed apartments where the furniture, half awful, half grotesque, was moulding away. Pictures were there, replete with such enduring beauty and expression: with such passion, truth, and power: that they seemed so many young and fresh realities among a host of spectres. I thought these often intermingled with the old days of the city; with its beauties, tyrants, captains, patriots, merchants, courtiers, priests: nay,

with its very stones, and bricks, and public places; all of which lived again, about me, on the walls. Then, coming down some marble staircase where the water lapped and oozed against the lower steps, I passed into my boat again, and went on in my dream.

Floating down narrow lanes, where carpenters, at work with plane and chisel in their shops, tossed the light shaving straight upon the water, where it lay like weed, or ebbed away before me in a tangled heap. Past open doors, decayed and rotten from long steeping in the wet, through which some scanty patch of vine shone green and bright, making unusual shadows on the pavement with its trembling leaves. Past quays and terraces, where women, gracefully veiled, were passing and repassing, and where idlers were reclining in the sunshine, on flagstones and on flights of steps. Past bridges, where there were idlers too; loitering and looking over. Below stone balconies, erected at a giddy height, before the loftiest windows of the loftiest houses. Past plots of garden, theatres, shrines, prodigious piles of architecture—Gothic—Saracenic—fanciful with all the fancies of all times and countries. Past buildings that were high, and low, and black, and white, and straight, and crooked; mean and grand, crazy and strong. Twining among a tangled lot of boats and barges, and shooting out at last into a Grand Canal! There, in the errant fancy of my dream, I saw old Shylock passing to and fro upon a bridge, all built upon with shops and humming with the tongues of men; a form I seemed to know for Desdemona's, leaned down through a

latticed blind to pluck a flower. And, in the dream, I thought that Shakespeare's spirit was abroad upon the water somewhere; stealing through the city.

At night, when two votive lamps burned before an image of the Virgin, in a gallery outside the great cathedral, near the roof, I fancied that the great piazza of the Winged Lion was a blaze of cheerful light, and that its whole arcade was thronged with people; while crowds were diverting themselves in splendid coffee-houses opening from it—which were never shut, I thought, but open all night long. When the bronze giants struck the hour of midnight on the bell, I thought the life and animation of the city were all centred here; and as I rowed away, abreast the silent quays, I only saw them dotted, here and there, with sleeping boatmen wrapped up in their cloaks, and lying at full length upon the stones.

But, close about the quays and churches, palaces and prisons: sucking at their walls, and welling up into the secret places of the town: crept the water always. Noiseless and watchful: coiled round and round it, in its many folds, like an old serpent: waiting for the time, I thought, when people should look down into its depths for any stone of the old city that had claimed to be its mistress.

Thus it floated me away, until I awoke in the old Market-place at Verona. I had many and many a time, thought since of this strange Dream upon the water: half wondering if it lie there yet, and if its name be Venice.



## ORIGIN OF VENICE

GRANT ALLEN

THE very name of Venezia, or Venice, by which we now know the city of the lagoons, is in its origin the name, not of a town, but of a country. Upon the proper comprehension of this curious fact depends a proper comprehension of much that is essential in the early history of the city and of the Republic.

The rich and fertile valley of the Po had for its commercial centre from a very remote period the town of Mediolanum or Milan. But its port for the time being, though often altered, lay always on the Adriatic. That sea derives its name, indeed, from the town of Hatria (later corrupted into Adria), which was the earliest centre of the Po valley traffic. Hatria and its sister town of Spina, however, gave way in imperial Roman times to Padua, and again in the days of the lower empire to Aquileia, near Trieste, and to Altinum, on the mainland just opposite Torcello. Padua in particular was a very prosperous and populous town under the early emperors; it gathered into itself the surplus wealth of the whole Po valley.

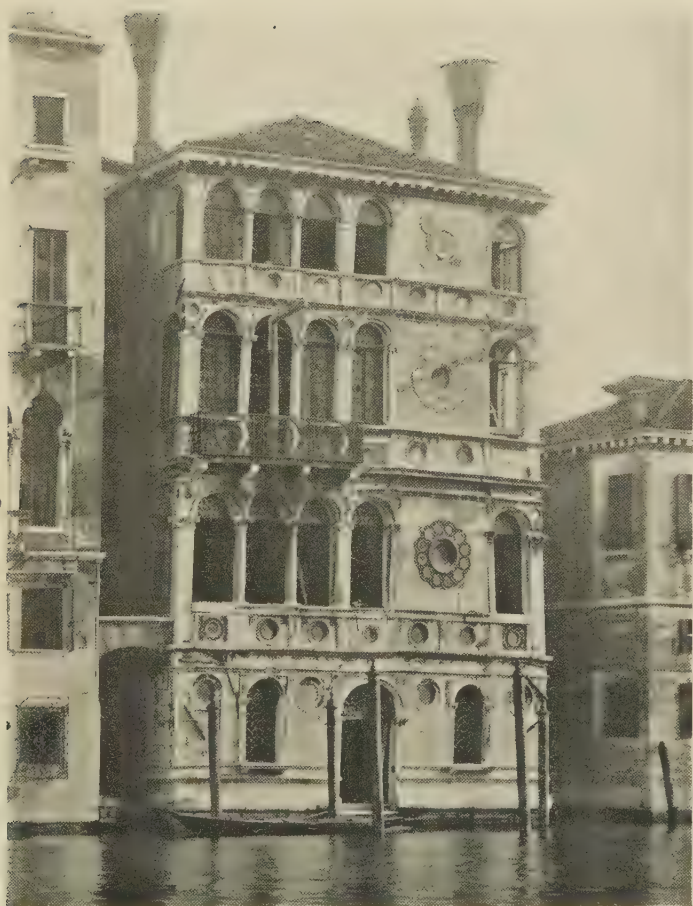
The district between Verona and the sea, known to the Romans as Venezia, seems in the most ancient times of which we have any record to have been inhabited by an Etruscan population. Later, however, it was occupied by the Veneti,



an Illyrian tribe, whose name still survives in that of Venice and in the district known as Il Veneto. But much Etruscan blood must have remained in the land even after their conquest: and it is doubtless to this persistent Etruscan element that the Venetians owe their marked artistic faculty. The country of the Veneti was assimilated and Romanised (by nominal alliance with Rome), in the third century before Christ. Under the Romans, Venetia, and its capital Padua, grew extremely wealthy, and the trade of the Lombard plain (as we now call it), the ancient Gallia Cisalpina, was concentrated on this district.

The Po and the other rivers of the sub-Alpine region bring down to the Adriatic a mass of silt, which forms fan-like deltas, and spreads on either side of the mouth in belts or bars (the Lido), which enclose vast lagoons of shallow water. These lagoons consist near the mainland of basking mudbanks, more or less reclaimed, and intersected by natural or artificial canals; further out towards the bars, or Lidi, they deepen somewhat, but contain in places numerous low islands. During the long troubles of the barbaric irruptions, in the Fourth, Fifth and subsequent centuries, the ports of the lagoons, better protected both by land and sea than those of the Po, began to rise into comparative importance; on the south Ravenna, on the north Altinum, acquired increased commercial value. The slow silting up of the older harbours, as well as the dangers of the political situation, brought about in part this alteration in mercantile conditions.

When Attila and his Huns invaded Italy in 453, they



PALAZZO DARIO



destroyed Padua, and also Altinum; and though we need not suppose that those cities thereupon ceased entirely to exist, yet it is at least certain that their commercial importance was ruined for the time being. The people of Altinum took refuge on one of the islands in the lagoon, and built Torcello, which may thus be regarded in a certain sense as the mother-city of Venice. Subsequent waves of conquest had like results. Later on, in 568, the Lombards, a German tribe, invaded Italy, and completed the ruin of Padua, Altinum and Aquileia. The relics of the Romanised and Christian Veneti then fled to the islands, to which we may suppose a constant migration of fugitives had been taking place for more than a century. The Paduans, in particular, seem to have settled at Malamocco. The subjected mainland became known as Lombardy, from its Germanic conquerors, and the free remnant of the Veneti, still bearing their old name, built new homes on the flat islets of Rivo Alto, Malamocco and Torcello, which were the most secure from attack in their shallow waters. This last fringe of their territory they still knew as Venetia or Venezia; the particular island, or group of islands, on which modern Venice now stands, bore simply at that time its original name of Rivo Alto, or Rialto, that is to say, the Deep Channel.

The Romanised semi-Etruscan Christian Republic of Venezia seems from the very first to have been governed by a Dux or Doge (that is to say, Duke), in nominal subjection to the Eastern Emperor at Constantinople. The Goth and the Lombard, the Frank and the Hun, never ruled this

last corner of the Roman world. The earliest of the Doges whose name has come down to us was Paulucius Anafestus, who is said to have died in 716, and whose seat of government seems to have been at Torcello. Later, the Doge of the Venetians apparently resided at Malamocco, a town which no longer exists, having been destroyed by submergence, though part of the bank of the Lido opposite still retains its name. Isolated in their island fastnesses, the Venetians, as we may now begin to call them, grew rich and powerful at a time when the rest of Western Europe was sinking lower and lower in barbarism; they kept up their intercourse with the civilised Roman east in Constantinople, and also with Alexandria (the last then Mohammedanised), and they acted as intermediaries between the Lombard Kingdom and the still Christian Levant. When Charlemagne in the Eighth Century conquered the Lombards and founded the renewed (Teutonic) Roman Empire of the West, the Venetians, not yet established in modern Venice, fled from Malamocco to Rivo Alto to escape his son, King Pepin, whom they soon repelled from the lagoons. About the same time they seem to have made themselves practically independent of the eastern empire, without becoming a part of the western and essentially German one of the Carlovingians. Not long after, Malamocco was deserted, partly no doubt owing to the destruction by Pepin, but partly also perhaps because it began to be threatened with submergence: and the Venetians then determined to fix their seat of government on Rivo Alto, or Rialto, the existing

Venice. For a long time the new town was still spoken of as Rialto, as indeed a part of it is by its own inhabitants to the present day; but gradually the general name of Venezia, which belonged properly to the entire Republic, grew to be confined in usage to its capital, and most of us now know the city only as Venice.

Pepin was driven off in 809. The Doge's Palace was transferred to Rialto, and raised on the site of the existing building (according to tradition) in 819. Angelus Participotius was the first Doge to occupy it. From that period forward to the French Revolution, one palace after another housed the Duke of the Venetians on the same site. This was the real nucleus of the town of Venice, though the oldest part lay near the Rialto bridge. Malamocco did not entirely disappear, however, till 1107. The silting up of the harbour of Ravenna, the chief port of the Adriatic in late Roman times, and long an outlier of the Byzantine empire, contributed greatly, no doubt, to the rise of Venice: while the adoption of Rivo Alto with its deep navigable channel as the capital marks the gradual growth of an external commerce.

The Republic which thus sprang up among the islands of the lagoons was at first confined to the little archipelago itself, though it still looked upon Aquileia and Altinum as its mother cities, and still acknowledged in ecclesiastical matters the supremacy of the Patriarch of Grado. After the repulse of King Pepin, however, the Republic began to recognise its own strength and the importance of its posi-

tion, and embarked slowly at first, on a career of commerce and then of conquest. Its earliest acquisitions of territory were on the opposite Slavonic coast of Istria and Dalmatia; gradually its trade with the east led it, at the beginning of the Crusades, to acquire territory in the Levant and the Greek Archipelago. This eastern extension was mainly due to the conquest of Constantinople by Doge Enrico Dandolo during the Fourth Crusade (1204), an epoch-making event in the history of Venice which must constantly be borne in mind in examining her art-treasures. The little outlying western dependency had vanquished the capital of the Christian Eastern Empire to which it once belonged. The greatness of Venice dates from this period; it became the chief carrier between the east and the west; its vessels exported the surplus wealth of the Lombard plain, and brought in return, not only the timber and stone of Istria and Dalmatia, but the manufactured wares of Christian Constantinople, the wines of the Greek isles, and the oriental silks, carpets and spices of Mohammedan Egypt, Arabia and Bagdad. The Crusades, which impoverished the rest of Europe, doubly enriched Venice: she had the carrying and transport traffic in her own hands; and her conquests gave her the spoil of many eastern cities.

It is important to bear in mind, also, that the Venetian Republic (down to the French Revolution), was the one part of western Europe which never at any time formed a portion of any Teutonic Empire, Gothic, Lombard, Frank, or Saxon. Alone in the west, it carried on unbroken the



traditions of the Roman empire, and continued its corporate life without Teutonic adulteration. Its peculiar position as the gate between the east and west made a deep impress upon its arts and its architecture. The city remained long in friendly intercourse with the Byzantine realm; and an oriental tinge is thus to be found in all its early buildings and mosaics. St. Mark's in particular is based on St. Sophia at Constantinople; the capitals of its columns in both are strikingly similar; even Arab influence and the example of Cairo (or rather of early Alexandria), are visible in many parts of the building. Another element which imparts oriental tone to Venice is the number of imported works of art from Greek churches. Some of these the Republic frankly stole; others it carried away in good faith during times of stress to prevent them from falling into the hands of the Mohammedan conquerors. The older part of Venice is thus to some extent a museum of applied antiquities; the bronze horses from Constantinople over the portal of St. Mark's, the pillars of St. John of Acre on the south façade; the Greek lions of the Arsenal, the four porphyry emperors near the Doge's palace are cases in point; and similar instances will meet the visitor everywhere. Many bodies of Greek or eastern saints were also carried off from Syria or Asia Minor to preserve them from desecration at the hands of the infidel; and with these saints came their legends, unknown elsewhere in the west; so that the mosaics and sculptures based on them give a further note of orientalism to much of Venice. It may also be noted that the intense



Venetian love of colour, and the eye for colour which accompanies it, are rather eastern than western qualities. This peculiarity of a pure colour-sense is extremely noticeable both in Venetian architecture and Venetian painting.

The first Venice with which the traveller will have to deal is thus essentially a Romanesque-Byzantine city. It rose during the decay of the Roman empire, far from barbaric influences. Its buildings are Byzantine in type; its mosaics are mostly the work of Greek or half-Greek artists; its Madonnas and saints are Greek in aspect; and even the very lettering of the inscriptions is in Greek, not in Latin. And though ecclesiastically Venice belonged to the western or Roman church, the general assemblage of her early saints (best seen in the Atrium and Baptistery of St. Mark's), is thoroughly oriental. We must remember that during all her first great period she was connected by the sea with Constantinople and the east, but cut off by the lagoons and the impenetrable marshes from all intercourse with Teutonised Lombardy and the rest of Italy. In front lay her highway; behind lay her moat. At this period, indeed, it is hardly too much to say that (save for the accident of language), Venice was rather a Greek than an Italian city.

I strongly advise the tourist, therefore, to begin by forming a clear conception of this early Greekish Venice of the Tenth, Eleventh, Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries, and then go on to observe how the later Italianate Venice grew slowly out of it. Mediæval Italy was not Roman but Teu-

tonised: influences from the Teutonic Italy were late in affecting the outlying lagoon-land.

The beginnings of the change came with the conquests of Venice on the Italian mainland. Already Gothic art from the west had feebly invaded the Republic with the rise of the great Dominican and Franciscan churches (San Giovanni e Paolo and the Frari): the extension of Venice to the west, by the conquest of Padua and Verona (1405) completed the assimilation. Thenceforward the Renaissance began to make its mark on the city of the lagoons, though at a much later date than elsewhere in Italy. I recommended the visitor accordingly, after he has familiarised himself with *Byzantine Venice*, to trace the gradual encroachment of *Gothic art*, and then *the Renaissance movement*.

It is best, then to begin with the architecture, sculpture, and mosaics of St. Mark's; in connection with which the few remaining Byzantine palaces ought to be examined. The *Byzantine period* is marked by the habit of sawing up precious marbles and other coloured stones (imported for the most part from earlier eastern buildings), and using them as a thin veneer for the incrustation of brick buildings; also, by the frequent employment of decorations made by inserting ancient reliefs in the blank walls of churches or houses. The eastern conquests of Venice made oriental buildings a quarry for her architects. The *Gothic period* is marked by a peculiar local style, showing traces of Byzantine and Arab influence. The early *Renaissance work* at

Venice is nobler and more dignified than elsewhere in Italy. The *baroque school* of the Seventeenth Century, on the other hand is nowhere so appalling.

Venice was essentially a commercial Republic. Her greatness lay in her wealth. She flourished as long as she was the sole carrier between east and west; she declined rapidly after the discovery of America, and of the route to India round the Cape of Good Hope, which made the Atlantic supersede the Mediterranean as the highway of the nations. As Antwerp, Amsterdam and London rose, Venice fell. The re-opening of the Mediterranean route by the construction of the Suez Canal has galvanised her port into a slightly increased vitality of recent years; but she is still in the main a beautiful fossil-bed of various strata, extending from the Tenth to the Seventeenth Centuries.

Whoever enters Venice by rail at the present day ought to bear in mind that he arrives (across the lagoon), by the back door. The front door was designed for those who came by sea; there, Venice laid herself out to receive them with fitting splendour. The ambassadors or merchants who sailed up the navigable channel from the mouth of the Lido, saw first the Piazza, the Piazzetta, the two great granite columns, the campanile, St. Mark's, and the imposing façade of the Doge's Palace, reinforced at a later date by the white front of San Giorgio Maggiore and the cupolas of the Salute. This, though not perhaps the oldest part of the town, is the nucleus of historical Venice; and to it the traveller should devote the greater part of his atten-

tion. I strongly advise those whose stay is limited not to try to see all the churches and collections of the city, but to confine themselves strictly to St. Mark's, the Doge's Palace, the Academy, the Four Great Plague-Churches, and the tour of the Grand Canal, made slowly in a gondola.

Those who have three or four weeks at their disposal, however, ought early in their visit to see Torcello and Murano—Torcello, as perhaps the most ancient city of the lagoons, still preserved for us in something like its antique simplicity, amid picturesque desolation; Murano, as helping us to reconstruct the idea of Byzantine Venice. It is above all things important not to mix up in one whirling picture late additions like the Salute and the Ponte di Rialto with early Byzantine buildings like St. Mark's or the Palazzo Loredan, with Gothic architecture like the Doge's Palace, or the Ca' d' Oro, and with Renaissance masterpieces, like the Libreria Vecchia, or the ceilings of Paolo Veronese. Here more than anywhere else in Europe, save at Rome alone, though chronological treatment is difficult, a strictly chronological comprehension of the various stages of growth is essential to a right judgment.

Walk by land as much as possible. See what you see in a very leisurely fashion. Venice is all detail; unless you read the meaning of the detail, it will be of little use to you. Of course the mere colour and strangeness and picturesqueness of the water-city are a joy in themselves; but if you desire to learn, you must be prepared to give many days to St. Mark's alone, and to examine it slowly.

The patron saints of Venice are too numerous to catalogue. A few need only be borne in mind by those who pay but a short visit of a month or so. The Venetian fleets in the early ages brought home so many bodies of saints that the city became a veritable repository of holy corpses. First and foremost, of course, comes St. Mark, whose name, whose effigy, and whose winged lion occur everywhere in the city; to the Venetian of the Middle Ages, he was almost, indeed, the embodiment of Venice. He sleeps at St. Mark's. The body of St. Theodore, the earlier patron, never entirely dispossessed, lay in the Scuola (or Guild), of St. Theodore, near the church of San Salvatore (now a furniture shop). But the chief subsidiary saints of later Venice were St. George and St. Catharine, patrons of the territories of the Republic to the first of whom many churches are dedicated, while the second appears everywhere on numerous pictures and reliefs. The great plague saints are Sebastian, Roch and Job. These seven the tourist must remember and expect to recognise at every turn in his wanderings. The body of St. Nicholas, the sailor's saint, lay at San Niccolo di Lido, though a rival body, better authenticated or more believed in, was kept at Bari.

The costume of the Doges, and the Doge's cap; the Venetian type of Justice, with sword and scales; the almost indistinguishable figure of Venezia, also with sword and scales, enthroned between lions; and many like local allegories or symbols, the visitor should note and try to understand from the moment of his arrival.

## VENICE AND ROME

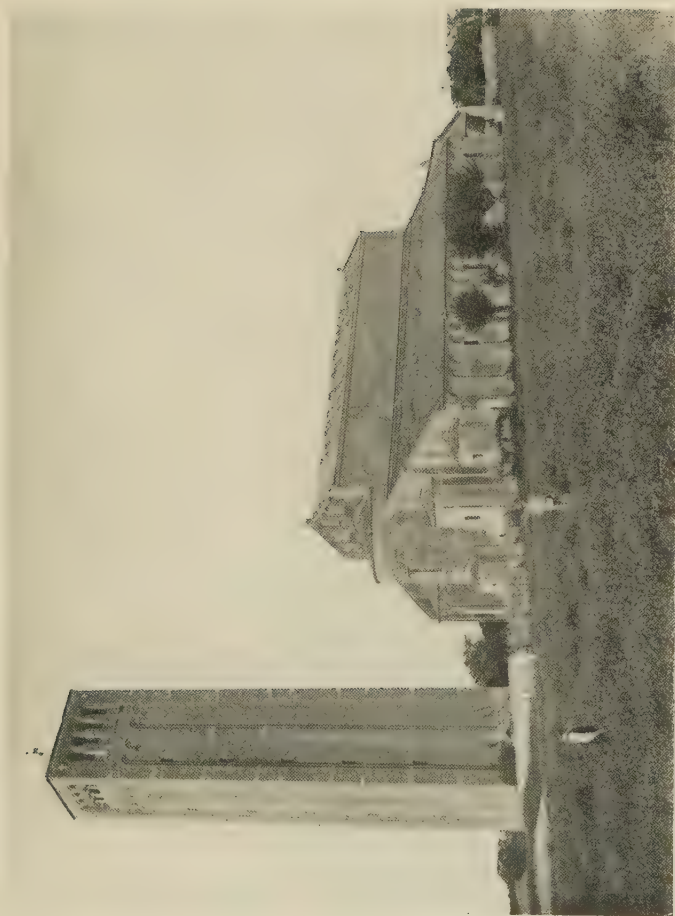
JOHN RICHARD GREEN

IT is the strangeness and completeness of the contrast which makes one's first row from Venice to Torcello so hard to forget. Behind us the great city sinks slowly into a low line of domes and towers; around us, dotted here and there over the gleaming surface, are the orange sails of trailing market boats; we skirt the great hay-barges of Mazarbo, whose boatmen bandy *lazzi* and badinage with our gondolier; we glide by a lonely cypress into a broader reach and, in front, across a waste of brown sedge and brushwood, the tower of Torcello rises sharply against the sky. There is something weird and unearthly in the suddenness with which one passes from the bright, luminous waters of the lagoon, barred with soft lines of violet light and broken with reflections of wall and bell-tower, into this presence of desolation and death. A whole world seems to part those dreary flats broken with lifeless inlets, those patches of sodden fields flung shapelessly among sheets of sullen water from the life and joy of the Grand Canal. And yet, really to understand the origin of Venice, those ages of terror and flight and exile in which the Republic took its birth, we must study them at Torcello. It was from the vast Alpine chain, which hangs in the haze of mid-day like a long, dim cloud-line to the north, that the hordes

of Hun and Goth burst on the Roman world. Their path lay along the coast, trending round to the west, where, lost among little villages that stand out white in the distant shadow, lie the sites of Heraclea and Altinum. Across these grey shallows, cut by the blue serpentine windings of deeper channels, the Romans of the older province of Venetia on the mainland fled before Attila or Theodoric or Alboin, to found the new Venetia of the lagoon. Eastward, over Lido, the glimmer of the Adriatic recalls the long centuries of the Pirate War, that struggle for life which shaped into their after-form the government and destinies of the infant State. Venice itself, the crown and end of struggle and of flight, lies, over shining miles of water, to the south. But it is here that one can best study the story of its birth; it is easier to realise those centuries of exile and buffeting for life amidst the dreary flats, the solitude, the poverty of Torcello, than beneath the gleaming front of the Ducal Palace or the mosaics of St. Mark.

Here, in fact, lies the secret of Venetian history, the one key by which it is possible to understand the strange riddle of the Republic. For thirteen centuries Venice lay moored, as it were, off the coast of Western Europe, without political analogue or social parallel. Its patriciate, its people, its government, were not what government or people or patriciate were in other countries of Western Christendom. The difference lay not in any peculiar institutions which it had developed, or in any novel form of social or administrative order which it had invented, but in the very origin of the





TORCELLO





state itself. We see this the better if we turn from Venice to our own homeland. The same age saw the birth of the two great maritime powers of modern Europe; for the settlements of the English in Britain cover the same century with those of the Roman exiles in the Venetian lagoon. But the English colonisation was the establishment of a purely Teutonic state on the wreck of Rome, while the Venetian was the establishment of a purely Roman state in the face of the Teuton. Venice, in its origin, was simply the imperial province of Venetia floated across to the islands of the shore. Before the successive waves of the Northern inroad, the citizens of the coast fled to the sand-banks which had long served them as gardens or merchant-ports. The "Chair of Atilla," the rough stone seat beside the Church of San Fosco, preserves the memory of one destroyer before whom a third part of the people of Altinum fled to Torcello and the islands around. Their city—even materially—passed with them. The new houses were built from ruins of the old. The very stones of Altinum served for the "New Altinum" which arose on the desolate isle, and inscriptions, pillars, capitals came, in the track of the exiles across the lagoon, to be worked into the fabric of its cathedral.

Neither citizens nor city was changed even in name. They had put out, for security, a few miles to sea, but the sand-banks on which they landed were still Venetia. The fugitive patricians were neither more nor less citizens of the imperial province because they had fled from Padua or

Altinum or Malamocco or Torcello. Their political allegiance was still due to the Empire. Their social organisation remained unaffected by the flight. So far were they from being severed from Rome, so far from entertaining any dreams of starting afresh in the "new democracy" which exists in the imagination of Daru and his followers, that the one boast of their annalists is that they are more Roman than the Romans themselves. Their nobles looked with contempt on the barbaric blood which had tainted that of the Colonnas or the Orsini; nor did any Isaurian peasant ever break the Roman line of doges as Leo broke the line of Roman emperors. Venice—as she proudly styled herself in aftertime—was "the legitimate daughter of Rome." The strip of sea-board from the Brenta to the Isonzo was the one spot in the Empire, from the Caspian to the Atlantic, where foot of barbarian never trod. And as it rose, so it set. From that older world of which it was a part, the history of Venice stretched on to the French Revolution, untouched by Teutonic influences. The old Roman life, which became strange even to the Capitol, lingered, unaltered, unimpaired, beside the palace of the duke. The strange ducal cap, the red ducal slippers, the fan of bright feathers borne before the ducal chair, all came unchanged from ages when they were the distinctions of every great officer of the Imperial State. It is startling to think that almost within the memory of living men Venice brought Rome—the Rome of Ambrose and Theodosius—to the very doors of the Western world; that the

living and unchanged tradition of the Empire passed away only with the last of the doges. On the tomb of Manin could men write truthfully, "Hic jacet ultimus Romanorum."

It is this simple continuance of the old social organisation, which the barbarians elsewhere overthrew, that explains the peculiar character of the Venetian patriciate. In all other countries of the West, the new feudal aristocracy sprung from the Teutonic invaders. In Italy itself, the nobles were descendants of Lombard conquerors, or of the barons who followed emperor after emperor across the Alps. Even when their names and characters had alike been moulded into Southern form, the "Seven Houses" of Pisa boasted of their descent from the seven barons of Emperor Otto. But the older genealogies of the senators, whose names stood written in the Golden Book of Venice, ran, truly or falsely, not to Teutonic, but to Roman origins. The Partecipazzii, the Dandoli, the Falieri, the Foscari, told of the flight of their Roman fathers before the barbarian sword from Pavia, Gaeta, Fano, Messina. Every quarter of Italy had given its exiles, but, above all, the coast round the head of the Gulf from Ravenna to Trieste. It was especially a flight and settlement of nobles. As soon as the barbaric hordes had swept away to the South, the farmer or the peasant would creep back to his fields and his cabin, and submit to the German master whom the conquest had left behind it. But the patrician had filled too great a place in the old social order to stoop easily to the new. He

remained camped as before in the island-refuge, among a crowd of dependents, his fishermen, his dock-labourers. Throughout the long ages which followed this original form of Venetian society remained unchanged. The populace of dependents never grew into a people. To the last, fisherman and gondolier clung to the great houses of which they were the clients, as the fishers of Torcello had clung to the great nobles of Altinum. No difference of tradition or language or blood parted them. Tradition, on the contrary, bound them together. No democratic agitator could appeal from the present to the past, as Rienzi invoked the memories of the Tribune against the feudal tyranny of the Colonnas. In Venice the past and present were one. The patrician of Venice simply governed the State as his fathers, the curials of Padua or Aquileia, had governed the State ten centuries before him.

It is this unity of Venetian society which makes Venetian history so unlike the history of other Italian towns, and to which Venice owes the peculiar picturesqueness and brightness which charm us still in its decay. Elsewhere the history of mediæval Italy sprung from the difference of race and tradition between conquered and conquerors, between Lombard noble and Italian serf. The communal revolt of the Twelfth Century, the democratic constitution of Milan or of Bologna, were in effect a rising of race against race, the awakening of a new people in the effort to throw off the yoke of the stranger. The huge embattled piles which flung their dark shadows over the streets of Florence tell

of the ceaseless war between baronage and people. The famous penalty by which some of the democratic communes condemned a recreant cobbler or tinker to "descend," as his worse punishment, "into the order of the *noblesse*," tells of the hate and issue of the struggle between them. But no trace of a struggle or hate breaks the annals of Venice. There is no people, no democratic Broletto, no Hall of the Commune. And as there was no "people," so in the mediæval sense of the word there was no "baronage." The nobles of Venice were not Lombard barons, but Roman patricians, untouched by feudal traditions, or by the strong instinct of personal independence which created feudalism. The shadow of the Empire is always over them; they look for greatness not to independent power or strife, but to joint co-operation in the government of the State. Their instinct is administrative; they shrink from disorder as from a barbaric thing; they are citizens, and nobles only because they are citizens. Of this political attitude of its patricians, Venice is itself the type. The palaces of Torcello or Rialto were houses not of war but of peace; no dark masses of tower and wall, but bright with marbles and frescoes, and broken with arcades of fretted masonry.

Venice, in a word, to her very close was a city of nobles, the one place in the modern world where the old senatorial houses of the Fifth Century lived and ruled as of old. But it was a city of Roman nobles. Like the Teutonic passion for war, the Teutonic scorn of commerce was strange

and unknown to the curial houses of the Italian municipalities, as it had been strange and unknown to the greatest houses of Rome. The senator of Padua or Aquileia, of Concordia, Altinum, or Ravenna, had always been a merchant, and in his new refuge he remained a merchant still. Venice was no "crowd of poor fishermen," as it has been sometimes described, who were gradually drawn to wider ventures and a larger commerce. The port of Aquileia had long been the emporium of a trade which reached northward to the Danube and eastward to Byzantine. What the Roman merchants of Venetia had been at Aquileia, they remained at Grado. The commerce of Altinum simply transferred itself to Torcello. The Paduan merchants passed to their old port of Rialto. Vague and rhetorical as is the letter of Cassiodorus, it shows how keen was the mercantile activity of the State from its beginning. Nothing could be more natural, more continuous in its historical development; nothing was more startling, more incomprehensible to the new world which had grown up in German moulds. The nobles of Henry VIII.'s court could not restrain their sneer at "the fishermen of Venice," the stately patricians who could look back from merchant noble to merchant noble through ages when the mushroom houses of England were unheard of. Only the genius of Shakespeare seized the grandeur of a social organisation which was still one with that of Rome and Athens and Tyre. The merchant of Venice is with him "a royal merchant." His "argosies o'ertop the petty traffickers." At the moment

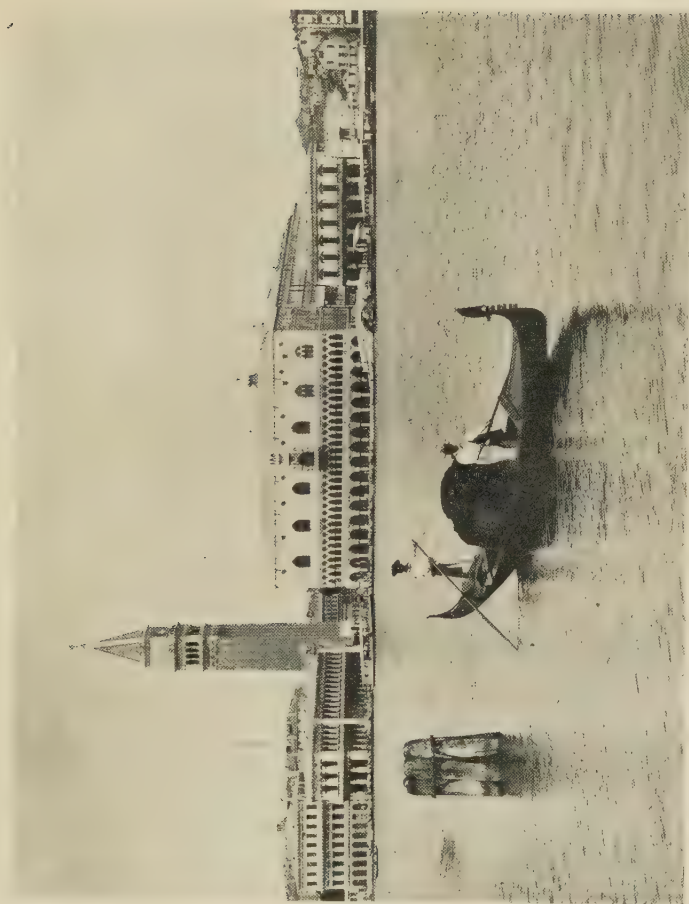


when feudalism was about to vanish away, the poet comprehended the grandeur of that commerce which it scorned, and the grandeur of the one State which had carried the nobler classic tradition across ages of brutality and ignorance. The great commercial state whose merchants are nobles, whose nobles are Romans, rises in all its majesty before us in the *Merchant of Venice*.

## *THE CITY OF THE LAGOONS*

JOHN RUSKIN

**I**N the olden days of travelling, now to return no more, in which distance could not be vanquished without toil, but in which that toil was rewarded, partly by the power of deliberate survey of the countries through which the journey lay, and partly by the happiness of the evening hours, when, from the top of the last hill he had surmounted, the traveller beheld the quiet village where he was to rest, scattered among the meadows beside its valley stream; or, from the long hoped for turn in the dusty perspective of the causeway, saw, for the first time, the towers of some famed city, faint in the rays of sunset—hours of peaceful and thoughtful pleasure, for which the rush of the arrival in the railway station is perhaps, not always, or to all men an equivalent,—in those days, I say, when there was something more to be anticipated and remembered in the first aspect of each successive halting-place, than a new arrangement of glass roofing and iron girder, there were few moments of which the recollection was more fondly cherished by the traveller than that which brought him within sight of Venice, as his gondola shot into the open lagoon from the canal of Mestre. Not but that the aspect of the city itself was generally the source of some slight disappointment, for, seen in this direction, its buildings are far less characteristic than those of the other great



VIEW OF VENICE



towns of Italy; but this inferiority was partly disguised by distance, and more than atoned for by the strange rising of its walls and towers out of the midst, as it seemed, of the deep sea, for it was impossible that the mind or eye could at once comprehend the shallowness of the vast sheet of water which stretched away in leagues of rippling lustre to the north and south, or trace the narrow line of islets bounding it to the east. The salt breeze, the white moaning sea-birds, the masses of black weed separating and disappearing gradually, in knots of heaving shoal, under the advance of the steady tide, all proclaimed it to be indeed the ocean on whose bosom the great city rested so calmly; not such blue, soft, lake-like ocean as bathes beneath the Neapolitan promontories, or sleeps beneath the marble rock of Genoa, but a sea with the bleak power of our own northern waves, yet subdued into a strange spacious rest, and changed from its angry pallor into a field of burnished gold, as the sun declined behind the belfry tower of the lonely island church, fitly named "St. George of the Seaweed." As the boat drew nearer to the city, the coast which the traveller had just left sank behind him into one long, low, sad-coloured line, tufted irregularly with brushwood and willows: but, at what seemed its northern extremity, the hills of Arqua rose in a dark cluster of purple pyramids balanced on the bright mirage of the lagoon; two or three smooth surges of inferior hill extended themselves about their roots, and beyond these, beginning with the craggy peaks above Vicenza, the chain of the Alps girded the whole

horizon to the north, a wall of jagged blue here and there showing through its clefts a wilderness of misty precipices, fading far back into the recesses of Cadore, and itself rising and breaking away eastward, where the sun struck opposite upon its snow, into mighty fragments of peaked light, standing up behind the barred clouds of evening, one after another, countless, the crown of the Adrian Sea, until the eye turned back from pursuing them, to rest upon the nearer burning of the campaniles of Murano, and on the great city, where it magnified itself along the waves, as the quick silent pacing of the gondola drew nearer and nearer. And at last, when its walls were reached, and the outermost of its untrodden streets was entered, not through towered gate or guarded rampart, but as a deep inlet between two rocks of coral in the Indian Sea; when first upon the traveller's sight opened the long ranges of columned palaces,—each with its black boat moored at the portal,—each with its image cast down, beneath its feet, upon that green pavement which every breeze broke into new fantasies of rich tessellation; when first, at the extremity of the bright vista, the shadowy Rialto threw its colossal curve slowly forth from behind the Palace of the Camerlenghi; that strange curve, so delicate, so adamantine, strong as a mountain cavern, graceful as a bow just bent; when first, before its moonlike circumference was all risen, the gondolier's cry, "Ah! Stali," struck sharp upon the ear, and the prow turned aside under the mighty cornices that half met over the narrow canal, where the splash of the water

followed close and loud, ringing along the marble by the boat's side; and when at last that boat darted forth upon the breadth of silver sea, across which the front of the Ducal Palace, flushed with its sanguine veins, looks to the snowy dome of Our Lady of Salvation,<sup>1</sup> it was no marvel that the mind should be so deeply entranced by the visionary charm of a scene so beautiful and so strange, as to forget the darker truths of its history and its being. Well might it seem that such a city had owed her existence rather to the rod of the enchanter, than the fear of the fugitive; that the waters which encircled her had been chosen for the mirror of her state, rather than the shelter of her nakedness; and that all which in nature was wild or merciless, —Time and Decay, as well as the waves and tempests,— had been won to adorn her instead of to destroy, and might still spare, for ages to come, that beauty which seemed to have fixed for its throne the sands of the hour-glass as well as of the sea.

And although the last few eventful years, fraught with change to the face of the whole earth, have been more fatal in their influence on Venice than the five hundred that preceded them; though the noble landscape of approach to her can now be seen no more, or seen only by a glance, as the engine slackens its rushing on the iron line; and though many of her palaces are forever defaced, and many in desecrated ruins, there is still so much of magic in her aspect, that the hurried traveller, who must leave her before the wonder of that first aspect has been worn away, may still

<sup>1</sup> Santa Maria della Salute.



be led to forget the humility of her origin, and to shut his eyes to the depth of her desolation. They, at least, are little to be envied, in whose hearts the great charities of the imagination lie dead, and for whom the fancy has no power to repress the importunity of painful impressions, or to raise what is ignoble, and disguise what is discordant, in a scene so rich in its remembrances, so surpassing in its beauty. But for this work of imagination there must be no permission during the task which is before us. The impotent feelings of romance, so singularly characteristic of this century, may indeed gild, but never save the remains of those mightier ages to which they are attached like climbing flowers; and they must be torn away from the magnificent fragments, if we would see them as they stood in their own strength. Those feelings, always as fruitless as they are fond, are in Venice not only incapable of protecting, but even of discerning, the objects to which they ought to have been attached. The Venice of modern fiction and drama is a thing of yesterday, a mere efflorescence of decay, a stage dream which the first ray of daylight must dissipate into dust. No prisoner, whose name is worth remembering, or whose sorrow deserved sympathy, ever crossed that "Bridge of Sighs," which is the centre of the Byronic ideal of Venice; no great merchant of Venice ever saw that Rialto under which the traveller now passes with breathless interest: the statue which Byron makes Faliero address as one of his great ancestors was erected to a soldier of fortune a hundred and fifty years after Faliero's death; and the

most conspicuous parts of the city have been so entirely altered in the course of the last three centuries, that if Henry Dandolo or Francis Foscari could be summoned from their tombs, and stood each on the deck of his galley at the entrance of the Grand Canal, that renowned entrance, the painter's favourite subject, the novelist's favourite scene, where the water first narrows by the steps of the Church of La Salute,—the mighty Doges would not know in what spot of the world they stood, would literally not recognise one stone of the great city, for whose sake, and by whose ingratitude, their grey hairs had been brought down with bitterness to the grave. The remains of *their* Venice lie hidden behind the cumbrous masses which were the delight of the nation in its dotage; hidden in many a grass-grown court, and silent pathway, and lightless canal, where the slow waves have sapped their foundations for five hundred years, and must soon prevail over them for ever. It must be our task to glean and gather them forth, and restore out of them some faint image of the lost city; more gorgeous a thousand fold than that which now exists, yet not created in the day-dream of the prince, nor the ostentation of the noble, but built by iron hands and patient hearts, contending against the adversity of nature and the fury of man, so that its wonderfulness cannot be grasped by the indolence of imagination, but only after frank inquiry into the true nature of that wild and solitary scene, whose restless tides and trembling sands did indeed shelter the birth of the city, but long denied her dominion.

From the mouths of the Adige to those of the Piave there stretches, at a variable distance of from three to five miles from the actual shore, a bank of sand, divided into long islands by narrow channels of sea. The space between this bank and the true shore consists of the sedimentary deposits from these and other rivers, a great plain of calcareous mud, covered, in the neighbourhood of Venice, by the sea at high water, to the depth in most places of a foot or a foot and a half, and nearly everywhere exposed at low tide, but divided by an intricate network of narrow and winding channels, from which the sea never retires. In some places, according to the run of the currents, the land has risen into marshy islets, consolidated, some by art and some by time, into ground firm enough to be built upon, or fruitful enough to be cultivated; in others, on the contrary, it has not reached the sea level; so that, at the average low water, shallow lakelets glitter among its irregularly exposed fields of seaweed. In the midst of the largest of these, increased in importance by the confluence of several large river channels towards one of the openings in the sea bank, the city of Venice itself is built, on a crowded cluster of islands; the various plots of higher ground which appear to the north and south of this central cluster, have at different periods been also thickly inhabited, and now bear, according to their size, the remains of cities, villages, or isolated convents and churches, scattered among spaces of open ground, partly waste and encumbered by ruins, partly under cultivation for the supply of the metropolis.

The average rise and fall of the tides is about three feet (varying considerably with the seasons); but this fall, on so flat a shore, is enough to cause continual movement in the waters, and in the main canals to produce a reflux which frequently runs like a mill-stream. At high water no land is visible for many miles to the north or south of Venice, except in the form of small islands crowned with towers or gleaming with villages: there is a channel, some three miles wide, between the city and the mainland, and some mile and a half wide between it and the sandy breakwater called the Lido, which divides the lagoon from the Adriatic, but which is so low as hardly to disturb the impression of the city's having been built in the midst of the ocean, although the secret of its true position is partly, yet not painfully, betrayed by the clusters of piles set to mark the deep-water channels, which undulate far away in spotty chains like the studded backs of huge sea-snakes, and by the quick glittering of the crisped and crowded waves that flicker and dance before the strong winds upon the unlifted level of the shallow sea. But the scene is widely different at low tide. A fall of eighteen or twenty inches is enough to show ground over the greater part of the lagoon; and at the complete ebb the city is seen standing in the midst of a dark plain of seaweed, of gloomy green, except only where the larger branches of the Brenta and its associated streams converge towards the port of the Lido. Through this salt and sombre plain the gondola and the fishing-boat advance by tortuous channels, seldom more than four or five feet

deep, and often so choked with slime that the heavier keels furrow the bottom till their crossing tracks are seen through the clear sea water like the ruts upon a wintry road, and the oar leaves blue gashes upon the ground at every stroke, or is entangled among the thick weed that fringes the banks with the weight of its sullen waves, leaning to and fro upon the uncertain sway of the exhausted tide. The scene is often profoundly oppressive, even at this day, when every plot of higher ground bears some fragment of fair building: but, in order to know what it was once, let the traveller follow in his boat at evening the windings of some unfrequented channel far into the midst of the melancholy plain; let him remove, in his imagination, the brightness of the great city that still extends itself in the distance, and the walls and towers from the islands that are near; and so wait, until the bright investiture and sweet warmth of the sunset are withdrawn from the waters, and the black desert of their shore lives in its nakedness beneath the night, pathless, comfortless, infirm, lost in dark languor and fearful silence, except where the salt rivulets splash into the tideless pools, or the sea-birds flit from their margins with a questioning cry; and he will be enabled to enter in some sort into the horror of the heart with which this solitude was anciently chosen by man for his habitation. They little thought, who first drove the stakes into the mud, and strewed the ocean reeds for their rest, that their children were to be the princes of that ocean, and their palaces its pride; and yet, in the great natural laws that rule that sorrowful

wilderness, let it be remembered what strange preparation had been made for the things which no human imagination could have foretold, and how the whole existence and fortune of the Venetian nation were anticipated or compelled, by the setting of those bars and doors to the rivers and the sea. Had deeper currents divided their islands, hostile navies would again and again have reduced the rising city into servitude; had stronger surges beaten their shores, all the riches and refinement of the Venetian architecture must have been exchanged for the walls and bulwarks of an ordinary sea-port. Had there been no tide, as in other parts of the Mediterranean, the narrow canals of the city would have become noisome, and the marsh in which it was built pestiferous. Had the tide been only a foot or eighteen inches higher in its rise, the water-access to the doors of the palaces would have been impossible; even as it is, there is sometimes a little difficulty, at the ebb, in landing without setting foot upon the lower and slippery steps: and the highest tides sometimes enter the courtyards, and overflow the entrance halls. Eighteen inches more of difference between the level of the flood and ebb would have rendered the doorsteps of every palace, at low water, a treacherous mass of weeds and limpets, and the entire system of water-carriage for the higher classes, in their easy and daily intercourse, must have been done away with. The streets of the city would have been widened, its network of canals filled up, and all the peculiar character of the place and the people destroyed.

The reader may perhaps have felt some pain in the contrast between this faithful view of the site of the Venetian Throne, and the romantic conception of it which we ordinarily form; but this pain, if he have felt it, ought to be more than counterbalanced by the value of the instance thus afforded to us at once of the inscrutableness and the wisdom of the ways of God. If, two thousand years ago, we had been permitted to watch the slow settling of the slime of those turbid rivers into the polluted sea, and the gaining upon its deep and fresh waters of the lifeless, impassable, unvoyageable plain, how little could we have understood the purpose with which those islands were shaped out of the void, and the torpid waters enclosed with their desolate walls of sand! How little could we have known, any more than of what now seems to us most distressful, dark, and objectless, the glorious aim which was then in the mind of Him in whose hand are all the corners of the earth! how little imagined that in the laws which were stretching forth the gloomy margins of those fruitless banks, and feeding the bitter grass among their shallows, there was indeed a preparation, and *the only preparation possible*, for the founding of a city which was to be set like a golden clasp on the girdle of the earth, to write her history on the white scrolls of the sea-surges, and to word it in their thunder, and to gather and give forth, in world-wide pulsation, the glory of the West and of the East, from the burning heart of her Fortitude and Splendour.



## THE LAGOONS

HORATIO F. BROWN

THE lagoons of Venice are a large basin, covering an area of one hundred and eighty-four square miles, and composed of shoal banks, intersected in all directions by deep channels. The form of the lagoons, roughly speaking, is that of a bent bow, a segment of a circle and the line that cuts it. The curved line follows the shore of the mainland; the straight line is composed of a number of long narrow islands, or *lidi*, which close the lagoons on the sea side, and shut out the Adriatic. It is these *lidi*, these sandy islands which are the important fact in the structure of the lagoons; without them the lagoons would not exist, and their surface would simply be added to the sea, which, in that case, would find its real shore not, as at present, on the outer side of these islands, but upon the mainland itself.

The lagoons are the result of overflowing by the sea and by the rivers which used to discharge their waters into them. But partly to avoid the danger from spring and autumn floods, partly on account of the malaria produced by the mingling of salt water and fresh, the Sile and Piave were connected at their mouths, and now empty themselves directly into the sea. The Brenta alone sends very considerable volume of fresh water into the lagoon. It is from

the Adriatic that these waters come which twice a day flood all the shallows of this basin, and sweep through the canals of Venice, cleansing the water streets, and performing the task of "pure ablution," round her ancient walls.

The *lidi* are not only intimately connected with the origin and general structure of the lagoons, but they are now the bulwark of Venice against the sea. That narrow strip of sandy dune, never more than half a mile in width, alone stands between Venice and the Adriatic, which would otherwise break in upon the lagoons and sweep the city down. When the sirocco is thundering on the sands of the Lido, and its boom is borne high in the air, one cannot help picturing the ruin that would follow should the slender barrier of sand give way beneath the battery of the stormy sea. Once or twice the sea has broken through this frail defence, and threatened the city; and almost the last important work undertaken by the Republic was the fortification of the *lidi*, at their weakest points by the Murazzi, great sea-walls, some formed by rough blocks of Istrian stone piled anyhow along the shore, others built up of solid and cemented masonry.

The lagoon of Venice is not a semi-stagnant marsh, but a water basin where the activity of the currents and tides is unceasing. Nor is the lagoon, in spite of its apparent unity, to be considered as one large tidal lake. It is, in fact, a complex of four water systems, quite distinct from one another, each with its main channels and tributary streams.

It is the *lidi* that determine this peculiar internal struc-

ture of the lagoon basin, which distinguishes it from other bodies of water, and makes it neither marsh nor lake nor sea, but something different from any of these. In the line of the *lidi* there are four breaches or ports, which give passage to the water between the lagoon and the open sea; they are the ports of Chioggia, Malamocco, Lido, and Tre Porti. There used to be a fifth, the port of Sant' Erasmo, but that was closed in 1474, in order to increase the volume of water at the Lido port. Only a very small body of water now passes through its mouth; and for all purposes of understanding the internal economy of the lagoons, we have to deal with the four ports above mentioned. It is through these four mouths that the sea comes flooding in upon the lagoons at the flow, and passes out at the ebb; and it is upon these ports that the whole system of currents and tides, which vivify the lagoons, is dependent.

The surface of the lagoons is traversed by five main channels, or water highways; and all of them centre in Venice. The course of these channels is marked by groups of posts, driven into the mud at regular intervals. But besides these principal thoroughfares there is a network of smaller canals, many of them ending nowhere, lost in the shoals, undistinguished by any sign-posts and known only to fishermen, smugglers, and those who have the practice of the lagoons. The five main channels are—first, that of the Lido, familiar to every one who knows Venice; it conducts to the sea by way of San Nicoletto and Sant' Andrea. This was the great port of the Venetian Republic. By the Lido mouth

her galleys sailed to war; her argosies came laden home, and, every festival of the Ascension, the Doge in the Bucentoro passed out to wed the Adriatic. The great eastern canal leads by Murano, Burano, Mazzorbo, and Torcello to the mainland near Altino. The northern channel, between Mestre and Venice, was once the usual approach to the sea-city before the railway bridge was built. A fourth canal leads to Fusina, also on the mainland, where the Brenta, or rather part of the Brenta, flows into the lagoon. And last, and most important of all, there is the canal to Malamocco and Chioggia, by which all the large shipping reaches Venice, now that the older port of the Lido has been allowed to silt up. Any one who wishes to see the lagoons might do worse than take these five canals in turn. From each of them he would obtain a different view of Venice, a fresh idea of the singular foundations from which the city rises, a varied composition of *campanili* and domes against the constant background of sky and Alps.

There are few great surfaces of water which are as sensitive as the lagoons of Venice. And this sensitiveness is the cause of constant change, change which surprises even those who know the lagoons best. The picturesque charm of the lagoon resides in its two main features—the water and sky; and the secret of their fascination is their endless variety secured by the vastness of the space which they include. The city itself and its attendant isles are always present, like the gems that grace the setting; but the setting changes infinitely, The islands and the stationary Alps that bound the vision,

alone remain immovable; all else in the landscape of the lagoons is shifting continually.

In the water there is the perpetual flux and reflux of the tides in endless operation; now revealing large tracts of green or brown upon the shoals, now cloaking all beneath one wide unbroken mantle of grey sea. The colour of the water surface itself is continually undergoing a prismatic change. The prevailing tone is grey, but grey of every hue—grey haze suffused by the low winter sun, blue grey, grey warmed with yellow or with pink, soft and delicious, the result of sirocco grey that is hard and cold under the sun or pure and silvery white beneath the moon. Grey is the dominant tone of colour, but at sunset and sunrise, there are the more gorgeous hues of rose and crimson, of orange, of purple, and of bronze. It would be impossible to discover any place where the pageantry of colour is more certain and more varied than it is upon the lagoons.

Not only on the water surface is there manifold change, but the same is happening hourly in the water body; the one is felt in the wide sweep of vision over the lagoon level, the other in the minute section which lies below our boat. These changes of tone in the water body depend upon action of wind, tide, and weather. If the sirocco has stirred the sands on the Lido, then the incoming tide will be opaquely green and mottled here and there with yellow stains such as are sometimes seen in jade; or if the sea be calm, the flowing tide will sweep through the canals clear and pale as aquamarine, or clear and dark as the rare stone, the tourmaline.

The prevailing tone upon the water surface is grey, the prevailing tone in the water body is green. And if that green be transparent, the forestry of water-weeds which clothe the bed of the lagoon, with all its finny denizens, the wavering of the seaweed tips beneath the current, the variety of colour upon the long streamers, make the few square feet below the boat as beautiful to contemplate as all the miles of water surface that stretch away on every side.

But the sky, even more than the water, is the glory of the Venetian lagoon. Nowhere, except at sea, could the eye master so vast an arc. And thus there is laid open to the contemplation nature busied in various occupations, for what is going on in the far east stands apart from that which engages wind and sunshine in the west; and sea and mountains, to the south and north, have different tasks allotted them. The heavens display the manifold workmanship of nature in unceasing activity. The clouds, moulded at their borders by the opposing atmosphere, mass their domes and pinnacles and mountainous buttresses under the compulsion of some internal force desiring to expand, until their edges are frayed and torn, and the storm-clouds burst and sweep across the sky. The premonition of the coming wind is given by the lifted clouds upon the far horizon, the long straight line below, the billowing vanguard above, as the whole cloud-wall is buoyed and driven before the gale. There are quiet skies, with fields of pearly grey and cirrus flecked above the tranquil misty veils that part and leave interspaces of pure blue. There are the thunder-clouds that

hang upon the hills and cool and melt away as night wears on. Above all there is the splendour of Venetian sunsets, and more especially the stormy ones, outflaming any painters canvas. The ominous masses of dun cloud, blown from the eastward; the rainbow that rises and spans the city, high and brilliant against sombre clouds urged so violently forward by the wind that their foremost battalions curve like the arc of a bow, and are kindled to tawny purple by the setting sun. Then the bursting of the storm; the riving of the cloud strata revealing behind them steel-blue layers, and further still behind, a hand's breadth of serene blue sky. And all the while the sun is going down, to westward in heavens that are calm and suffused with limpid golden light, unheeding of the tempest that sweeps towards the hills.

These operations of nature are so immense and so aloof, that personal human emotion seems to fall away before them, retiring to the vanishing point, and the spirit is left naked and alone, facing the radical forces of the universe.



## THE GONDOLA

THÉOPHILE GAUTIER

THE gondola has suffered much abuse in comic opera, novels and romances. That is no reason why it should not be better known. We will give a detailed description of it. The gondola is a natural production of Venice, an animated being with a special and local life, a kind of fish that can exist only in the water of a canal. The lagoon and the gondola are inseparable, and one is the complement of the other. Without the gondola, Venice would be impossible. The city is a madrepore, the mollusc of which is the gondola. It alone can wind in and out among the inextricable network and capillary system of the aquatic streets.

The narrow and long gondola, raised at both ends, and drawing little water, has the form of a skate. Its prow is armed with a flat and polished piece of iron which vaguely recalls the curved neck of a swan, or rather the neck of a violin with its pegs. Six teeth, the interstices of which are sometimes filled with pierced work, contribute to this resemblance. This piece of iron serves for decoration, for defense and for counterpoise, the craft being more heavily weighted behind. On the bulwark of the gondola, close to the prow and the stern, are fixed two pieces of wood, curved like ox-horns, in which the gondolier rests his oar while he



GRAND CANAL



stands on a little platform with his heel wedged in a little socket. The whole visible gondola is coated with tar, or painted black. A more or less rich carpet covers the bottom. In the centre, the cabin is placed, the *felce*, which is easily removed if we want to substitute an awning, a modern degeneracy at which every good Venetian groans. The *felce* is entirely made of black cloth and furnished with two soft cushions covered with morocco of the same hue, back to back; moreover, there are two bracket seats at the sides so that it will accommodate four. On each lateral face two windows are pierced. These are usually left open, but may be closed in three ways: first, by a bevelled square of Venetian glass, or a frame with flowers cut in the crystal; secondly, by a Venetian slat blind, so as to see without being seen; and thirdly, by a cloth shade, over which, for the sake of more mystery, one can lower the outside covering of the *felce*. These different systems of blind slide in a transverse groove. The door, by which we enter backwards, since it would be difficult to turn around in this narrow space, has simply a window and a panel. The wooden portion is carved with more or less elegance according to the wealth of the owner, or the taste of the gondolier. On the left doorcase shines a copper shield surmounted by a crown. Here one has one's arms or monogram engraved. Above it a little frame with a glass contains the image for which the host or the gondolier cherishes a special devotion: the Holy Virgin, St. Mark, St. Theodore, or St. George.

It is on that side also that the lantern is fixed, a custom

that is somewhat falling into disuse, for many gondolas are navigated without having this star on their brow. Because of the coat-of-arms, the saint and the lantern, the left is the place of honour; it is there that women, and aged or important persons sit. At the back, a movable panel enables one to speak to the gondolier posted on the stern, the only one who really manages the boat, his paddle being an oar and a rudder at the same time. Two cords of silk with two handles help you to rise when you want to go out, for the seats are very low. The cloth of the *felce* is embellished on the outside by tufts of silk similar to those of priests' hoods, and when we want to shut ourselves up completely, it falls over the back of the cabin like too long a pall over a coffin. To conclude the description, let us say that on the inside of the bulwarks a sort of arabesque in white is traced upon the black ground of the wood. All this has not a great air of gaiety; and yet, if we may believe Lord Byron's *Beppo*, as amusing scenes take place in these black gondolas as in funeral coaches. Madame Malibran, who did not like to go into these little catafalques, unsuccessfully tried to get their hue altered. This tint, which strikes us as lugubrious, does not seem so to the Venetians, who are accustomed to black by the sumptuary edicts of the ancient republic, and among whom the water hearses, mutes and shrouds are red.

## THE OUTER RIM

WILLIAM SHARP

NO one to whom Venice means something more than a merely unique city because of its waterways, a place of resort because to go there is one of the things to do, could spend any length of time within its magic influence without visiting, or at least endeavouring to visit, two places that once rivalled the "sea-queen" herself in stir of life and natural beauty. One of these is Chioggia, many miles to the south, past the islands of S. Lazzaro and S. Spirito, past La Grazia and Poveglia, past Malamocco and low-lying Pelestrina, past those three miles of great walls of Istrain stone, those *murazzi* which, like the dykes of Holland, offer an unvanquished front to the tidal rush and ceaseless wash of the sea. Venice is discrowned, if not of all her beauty, at least of her ancient power, her long-surviving splendour; but Chioggia is more than discrowned—she is humbled like a slave that can never again escape from the slough of long degradation. The fate of Tyre is better: no longer to see the galleys of the East and the Phœnician ships pass by in disdain, but to have perished and be as utterly unknown as the golden Ophir of still more ancient days. Visiting Chioggia, one sees a deserted and decayed town, a listless fisherfolk, indolent women who have yet, here and there, something of that typical Venetian beauty beloved of

Titian and Paul Veronese; and one cannot well refrain from thinking that that terrible six months' duel, that life-and-death struggle between the Republics of St. George and St. Mark, which took place five hundred years ago, exhausted for ever the vital energy of this southern Venice. The conquering foot of Daria, and the relentless grip of Pisani, must between them have left Chioggia with small remnant of its pristine power.

But six miles north of the Lion of St. Mark, amid shallow and sluggish lagoons, lies the dead body of a city greater than Chioggia,—Torcello, the “mother of Venice.” Scarcely, indeed, can it be said that even the dead body of what was once a populous town still rests here; it is as though only a few bleached bones yet lay exposed to the scorching sun of summer, to the salt and bitter sea-winds of winter, to the miasmatic mists of desolate autumn. Habitations there are none: only the deserted fanes of Santa Fosca and the Duomo, a lifeless Palazzo Pubblico, a lonely and silent Campanile. In the words of Ruskin, these “lie like a little company of ships becalmed on a far-away sea.”

The day was an exceptionally bright one, warm, but not oppressive, with a cool wind that blew joyously without becoming too fresh for pleasant sailing in the open lagoons to the north; then we had gone by a longer way for the sake of the pleasure of such voyaging—eastward past S. Maria della Salute, and close under the shadows of the great church upon the Isola di S. Giorgio Maggiore, with the busy Riva degli Schiavoni on our left reaching on to the green and





CANAL IN TORCELLO



practically deserted promontory of the Public Gardens. Then rounding the Punta della Motta, our gondolier rowed us swiftly northward amid the unique loveliness of the Venetian lagoons.

A soft sirocco blew, not indeed with that virulent breath from the south-east, which the term is apt to suggest, but still with such enervating mildness as to determine us to reach our destination by the shortest way possible. We soon found ourselves gliding past the Campo S. Angelo, then into the Grand Canal once more by the timeworn Palazzo Corner Spinelli, past the Palazzi Grimani, Bembo, and Manin, under the Rialto, and so out again into the open—after gliding through many narrow canals, and rounding in some magic way seemingly impossible corners—out beyond the Fondamenta Nuova, with the great square opening of the Lucca della Misericordia on our left. On the right we leave behind us a square white house, as lovely in appearance, and as deserted in actual fact, as though it stood in the midst of the rank swamps of the Laguna Morta to the south of Fusina. This is the Casa degli Spiriti, a place of ghostly repute, where no Italian would rest overnight on any consideration. For in this “House of Spirits,” it was once the custom to leave the confined dead over night, interment taking place next day at the neighbouring island of San Michele. No wonder this half-way house between the living and the dead should remain uninhabited, retaining as it does in the imagination of the Venetians an unpleasant savour of the supernatural.

As we were swiftly urged upon our way, had it not been

for the stalwart figure of Luigi in the forepart of the gondola, we might have imagined we were drifting through the Sea of the Magic Isles, that all before us was as unreal as the mirage that with its illusive beauty haunts at times the weary gaze upon inland seas of sand. More fair, indeed, than any mirage was the scene that we beheld; yet wonderfully mirage-like was it by reason of the palpitating haze that dwelt like the visible breath of the sirocco upon mainland, isle and lagoon.

Far to the right some thickly clustered and windless trees rose from the quivering sea-line, or rather seemed to hover just above the lagoon,—the acacias, namely, in whose shadowy mist the Fort of S. Nicolo guards the “Gates of the Lido.” Northwest of this dimly defined island-wood we espied Sant’ Elena and San Michele; in the lee of the latter three funeral gondolas skirting the high wall that protects the graves from the imperative tides; while before us lay Murano, a denser and darker mist above it from the furnaces of the glass manufactories, for which it is so famous. Northwestward we looked towards Mestre, and southward from thence along the Laguna Morta towards Fusina—a long line of shadowy trees apparently rising from the sea, with spaces here and there between as though a slow tide were imperceptibly rising and flooding a long strip of land, at intervals dinted with hollows already washed over by the grey-green water. The silvery sirocco mist hid from us the shapes of Alps to the north, or Euganeans to the west. We could just descry, indeed, that part of the Laguna

Morta which stretches from beneath the long railway-bridge towards Fusina—those low banks of slimy ooze or mud, which collectively are called the “Dead Lagoon,” a strange and desolate region haunted only by the sea-mew, the wild snipe, and the bittern, the newt that loves the slimy ooze, and the sea-adder amongst the rank grasses that rise from the shallow brackish water clarified by no urgent tide.

As we left Murano behind us, and glided along the grey-green of the open lagoon between it and Burano, still more did the fancy grow upon us that we were adrift upon dream-land waters, and it was difficult to tell, looking around and beyond us, where the sea-line and sky-line met, for the breath of the sirocco made sea and sky, islands and shadowy trees and dim mainland outlines alike unsubstantial. That a change was more or less imminent, even if we had not heard Luigi draw Francesco’s attention to the fact, we both ere long perceived, for at frequent intervals a sudden but transitory shimmer quivered in the misty atmosphere to the north, seemingly, as though behind a veil of silvery gauze a current of air were passing by. Now and again the shrouded sun seemed to gather fresh power, and to lighten for a few minutes with its dimly diffused gleams the strange scene, wholly ærial in appearance that met our gaze. It was in some such vivifying interval as this that we passed the islands of Burano and Mazzorbo, and saw before us the dreary and desolate shores of Torcello. Looking backward we saw the lagoons shining with a dull metallic glitter, and the intense heat brooding in haze upon distant Venice, and,

like a mirage within a mirage, the islanded coast-line of the Laguna Morta from Mestre to Fusina shining dimly blue above the intensely bright but sparkless silver of the inflowing tide.

When our gondola glided alongside of the wave-worn and irregular stones that form the pier, and we stepped from it on to the salt grasses that lead up to the so-called piazza, we again realised to the full the absoluteness of the sense of desolation. When we had last been at Torcello, there had been some cattle in the green meadow beyond the Duomo, tended by a dark-haired shepherd youth, who seemed something between a water-god, a faun, and a young David; but now no living thing met our gaze, save a sea-bird that screamed harshly as it rose from a reedy morass and sailed round and round the lonely square tower of the Campanile. The soft lapping of the water against the gondola and faint rustle of the tide against the numerous marshy inlets accentuated instead of relieving the deathly stillness.

We ascended the Campanile, though as far as my friend was concerned there was no longer any necessity to sketch elsewhere than in the meadows at our feet. But neither by words nor the painter's brush could the ever-varying and ever-wonderful beauty and strangeness of the scene be adequately rendered, nor would it be easy to say what times and seasons surpass each other in supreme fascination—probably in the hour of sunset in summer with a breeze from the north, and the atmosphere intensely clear; or at moonrise in August or September, when the skies above are of deepest

purple, and the planets and stars are like gold lamps and silver-shining globes, and over the stagnant morasses wandering marsh-lights flit to-and-fro like the ghosts of those deadly fires which so long ago embraced in a long death-agony the cities of Altinum and Aquileia, whose neighbouring sites now abide in the same desolation as Torcello.

But even in the misty noon of this day of our visit, the beauty was at once memorable and strangely impressive. Below us were the salt creeks and dreary morasses of the Torcellan shore, the Duomo, the ancient church of Santa Fosca, and the anything but palatial Palazzo Pubblico; beyond these, occasional short meadows of brilliant green, with purple orchis and tall gamboge-tinted hellebore, and even some sprays of pink gladiolus interspersed among the seeded grasses, and at frequent intervals upon the sandy ridges small bands of poppies; beyond these ridges again the misty blue of the Adriatic washing onward past the long line of Malamocco. To the north and west we could just descry the dim outlines of the Friulian Alps and the shadowy Euganeans; while southward in every direction the wings of the sirocco spread a silvery haze, through whose shifting veil glimpses only at intervals were to be caught of the domes and palaces of Venice, the islands of Burano, Murano, San Michele, Sant' Elena, and the wooded promontory of San Nicoletto—to the west, Mestre and the unreal islands beyond the Canale di Brenta.

Later on we sought that rough stone seat which legend declares, on very dubious grounds, to have been the throne of



Attila when he watched the blaze of burning Altinum reddening the sky. Here my friend sketched, and so the pleasant and dreamy hours passed on till late in the afternoon. Suddenly a lark's song rose clear and strong, like a swift uprising fountain in a desert place; and, looking up to descry the welcome singer, I noticed that the wind had fallen wholly from its previous slight breath to absolute stillness.

“And skyward yearning from the sea there rose,  
And seaward yearning from the sky there fell,  
A spirit of deep content unspeakable.”

—*William Watson.*

In a few minutes, like a mist before sunrise, the silvery gauze of the sirocco gradually dispelled or retreated, first leaving Venice clear in the golden sunlight, then the blue waters of the lagoon to the west of the Lido of Sant' Elisabetta, and then finally passed away by the sea-washed Malamocco, along the distant narrow strand of Pelestrina, and onwards towards unseen Chioggia thirty miles or more away to the south.

As we left Torcello, already looking far more desolate, and almost as though it were awakening from a dream, a cool slight wind from the far-off Carnic Alps stole forth, and by the time that Burano was passed the deep blue waters were here and there curled with white foam, lightly tossed from short wave to wave. As Murano came under our lee, about half a mile to the east, we saw Venice as she can only be seen half a dozen times in a year. Each dome and palace

and fretted spire was outlined in purple-black against a circumambient halo of wild-rose pink, shading to a gorgeous carmine, and thence to an undescribably soft and beautiful crimson; through these, great streaks and innumerable islets of translucent amethyst spread and shone, while every here and there bars and narrow shafts of absolute gold pierced the azure and purple and crimson, like promontories in a rainbow-coloured sea. As these again, like fronds of a gigantic fan, six or seven great streamers of pale saffron stretched from the setting sun to the depths of the sky, and it seemed for a moment as though the whole visible world, without motion, without sound, were dissolving away in a glory and splendour of light and ineffable colour.

## THE TRAGHETTI

HORATIO F. BROWN

THE *traghetti* of Venice, the ferries that cross the Grand Canal, or ply from point to point on the Giudecca, are a feature no less peculiar to the city than are the gondolas themselves, and they are quite as ancient. There are as many as sixteen of the ferries across the Grand Canal and the Giudecca: and each of them has its own history, its own archives and documents. For from its foundation each *traghetto* was a guild, a close corporation with a limited number of members, with its own particular rules, or *mariegole*, inscribed on parchment, in Gothic characters, "lettere di forma," as the gondoliers called them, and adorned with capitals painted in vermillion, and here and there an illuminated page showing the patron saint of the *traghetto*, or the Assumption of Madonna into heaven. The *mariegole* of the various *traghetti*, in their old Venetian bindings of morocco and gold, may still be seen in the archives of the Frari: and a singular fascination attaches to the ancient, time-stained parchment which contains the history of that system of self-government which was developed by the gondoliers during five centuries of Venetian story, and whose rules are expressed in rich and vigorous dialect. The earliest of these *mariegole* belongs to the *traghetto* of Santa Sofia, near the Rialto, and dates from the year 1344: the

*traghetto* itself, however, was probably much older. Yet the same regulations and customs which governed the gondoliers in the Fourteenth Century, hold good in the Nineteenth. A *traghetto* of to-day closely resembles a *traghetto* of 1300, though the years have overlaid its lines with dust: it is still a corporation, with property and endowments of its own: the same officers, under the same titles, still keep order among the brothers: only the whole institution has a somewhat ancient air, is marred by symptoms of decay, and we fear that it may not last much longer. Indeed, the history and internal arrangement of the *traghetti* offer the best example of that which makes the subject of gondolier life interesting to the student of antiquity: for the *traghetti* are, in fact, a genuine part of the Venetian Republic imbedded in United Italy; a fossil survival unique in the history of the country, and perhaps in that of the world.

The date at which the first *traghetto* was established, that is when the gondoliers plying for hire first formed themselves into a guild at their ferry, is not known: but such a guild was certainly in existence before the middle of the Fourteenth Century. A corporation of this nature was called a *scuola* at Venice: and from the very first these schools of the gondoliers were of a religious character, dedicated to a patron saint, and in close connection with the church of the parish where the ferry was situated. This is the way in which the *scuola* of Santa Maria Zobenigo opens its book of rules:

“ In the name of God, the Eternal Father, and of His Son

Misser Jesu Cristo, and of His glorious mother, the Virgin Mary, and of the thrice-blessed patron Misser San Marco, and of Misser San Gregorio, who are the guardians of us the boatmen at the *traghetto* of San Gregorio and Santa Maria Zobenigo: may they help each and all of us brothers to live in fear of the Lord God and with peace and brotherly love between us, first in health and prosperity and then to salvation of our souls and the remission of our sins." And in their parish church the brothers of each *scuola* had a special place appointed for them, usually under the organ, where they sat in a body on Sundays, their officers at the head of each bench. The first section of the rules which governed the schools invariably applies to Church observance: "The school pledges itself to keep a lamp burning day and night before the altar. . . . Every second Sunday in the month they shall cause a solemn mass to be sung. . . . Every Monday an ordinary mass. . . . Every brother shall be obliged to confess twice a year, or at least once, and if, after a warning, he remain impenitent he shall be expelled. A brother who made the pilgrimage to Loretto, for the good of his soul, or of his body, was entitled to one centesimo a day while his journey lasted." Those brothers who "continue to live publicly in any deadly sin, shall be admonished, and expelled unless they amend." The fines for disobedience and quarrelsomeness were "applicate alla Madonna," that is, they formed a fund for keeping an oil lamp burning at the shrine of the Madonna, "per luminar la Madonna." And the first fare taken at the *traghetto* each

morning was dedicated to the same purpose and was called the "parada della Madonna."

The advantages conferred by these schools were so considerable and so obvious that, not only did every *traghetto* established one, but other classes of boatmen—the *burchieri*, or bargees, for example—applied for leave to found a school. The petition of the *burchieri* is a curious document. It is addressed to the Council of Ten, and sets forth that "this glorious lagoon is constantly in need of dredging, and should Your Excellencies grant out prayer, you will always have barges at your disposal for this purpose. Moreover, if we be allowed to found a school, we shall put an end to the dirt and noise on the Grand Canal under your windows. And we promise to pay eighty ducats yearly to the Water Commissioners. And, on the festival of the Ascension, we will make a triumph with our barges, to accompany the Doge when he goes to wed the sea."

There is a fact about the nationality of the gondoliers in the Fifteenth Century which is worth noticing in passing. From the lists of the members of each *traghetto*, it appears that less than half were natives of Venice. Some hail from Treviso, from Ravenna, Padua, Bergamo, Brescia, or Vicenza; very many from Salò, on the lake of Garda; but by far the largest number come from the Dalmatian coast, from Sobenico, Zara, Segna, Traù, Spalato. A century later, these foreign names had disappeared. The gondoliers had either become, for the most part, Venetians proper, or, more probably, the foreign names had been dropped, as the

families took root in their new home. However that may be, the men who first established these schools with their admirable system of government, were chiefly foreigners and not Venetians.

Every gondolier who worked at a *traghetto* belonged, *ipso facto*, to the *scuola* of that *traghetto*; and his title was *barcariol del traghetto*, to distinguish him from his natural enemy, the *barcariol toso*, or loose gondolier, who went about poaching on the confines of the various ferries, and stealing a fare whenever he could.

The *scuole*, it is true, exist no longer in all their clearly defined constitution; the passage of time has broken down this structure of the early gondoliers. But the *traghetto* still survive and each is governed by its ancient officials, its *gastaldo* and *bancali*. The latter are still responsible for the good order of the men; they arrange the rotations of service; they see to the cleanness and safety of the landing-places; they retain their powers of trying, fining, or suspending a refractory brother; if the city authorities have any orders to issue, they communicate with the *gastaldo* and *bancali*; these officers are a true survival of the Fourteenth Century, with their duties, character and powers undiminished by the lapse of years. And the arrangements which these officers made of old for the good government of their *traghetto* retain their force in the Venice of to-day. In no profession are antique words more frequently to be found than in that of gondolier; the customs and phrases of their trade seem to have become hereditary in the blood of the gondoliers, though it is only



when modern regulations are imposed upon them that the men discover how deeply seated is their attachment to their ancient art.

The arrangements of the *traghetti* are simple and efficient to maintain order; for though the noise is often great and a stranger might well believe that the men spent the larger part of their time in quarrelling, yet, as a matter of fact, a serious quarrel between two brothers, while on duty rarely occurs. The internal arrangement of a *traghetto* will be most easily understood by taking a typical instance, the *traghetto* of Santa Maria Zobenigo. This has one other *traghetto*, that of San Maurizio, and one station, that of the Ponte delle Ostregghi, attached to it, and worked by the men of Santa Maria. Besides serving these three posts, the gondoliers have duty at the neighbouring hotel, and lastly there is the *patula*, or night service. All the members of the *traghetto*, forty-two in all, are divided into six companies, each of which works in rotation as follows: One day at San Maurizio, one day at Santa Maria Zobenigo, one day at the Ponte delle Ostregghi; then come the two most important and profitable days for work, at the hotel *Alla Locanda*, and the *patula*. One of the companies is on duty at the hotel each day, and the men answer in turn to the hotel porter's summons of *poppe a uno*, or *a due*, as one or two rowers are required. It is well to remember that should one wish to secure a particular gondolier, he must be called by his number; the rules of the *traghetto* forbid him to answer to his name. After the service at the hotel comes the *patula*, or

service of twenty-four hours at the principal ferry. The fares for the *parada*, or passage, from one side to the other, is five centesimi during the day, and ten after the great bell of St. Mark's has sounded at evening. The reason why this service of the *patula* is so profitable is the following: the service lasts from 9 A. M. till the following 9 A. M.; at 4 P. M. all the men except those belonging to the company on duty, leave the *traghetto*, thus reducing the numbers to a sixth, and increasing the gains. From 4 P. M. till 9 A. M. the men on the *patula* have the ferry all to themselves, and take all the hire that comes, both for services of an hour or more, as well as the fares for the *parada*, the only restriction being that the ferry must never be left with less than two men to attend to it. Their dinner is brought down to the ferry by the gondoliers' wives or children, and, in the summer, one may often see a whole family party supping together in the bows of a gondola. In the hot weather, the men sleep in their gondolas, and in winter, as many of them as can find room crowd into the little wooden hut which stands at the *traghetto*—the only remnant now of their chapter-house—where the *bancali* meet to settle the affairs of the fraternity. Sometimes the men on the *patula* club together, and divide the whole gains for the night in equal portions; sometimes each works on his own account.

The ordinary profits of the *traghetto* used formerly to be so great that the gondoliers neglected the service of the *patula*, preferring to spend their nights at home, or in the wine-shops. But now a gondolier will tell you that his

largest permanent gains each week come from the *patula*; and, at a good *traghetto*, he may count upon making four *lire* one night in every six, and frequently makes much more. At 9 A. M. those who have been on the *patula* the previous night, leave the *traghetto* for the whole of that day. The rotation of six days, three at the three posts, one at the hotel, one on the *patula*, and one off-day, makes up the diurnal life of the gondolier, unless he should be fortunate enough to have found a *padrone*, in which case he is free from all the rules and service of the *traghetto*. While on duty at the ferry, a few excellent rules suffice to keep order among the men. Those on duty are arranged numerically; and, when a passenger comes to the ferry, no one may call to him but the gondolier whose turn it is; the only exception to this rule being that if a friar wishes to cross the ferry, the boat last in the order is bound to serve him, and for nothing. This custom is, however, falling into disuse. No gondolier on duty may tie his boat to the *pali*, or posts, of the *traghetto*, nor may he wash his boat in *cavana*, the spaces between the posts where the gondola's bows run in. While on service, he is forbidden to go to the wine-shops; if he does, he loses his turn, and when he comes back he takes his place last on the list.

At the opening of the Seventeenth Century, the government was obliged to revolutionise the whole character of the *traghetti* by taking away their property in the liberties. Hitherto there had been five modes by which a man might become a member of a *traghetto*—either by election in chapter

of the school; or by the renunciation of a brother in his favour; or by exchange between two members of different ferries; or by the order of the Proveditori as filling a vacancy unfilled by the school; or by order of the Proveditori as a reward for good naval service. Now, all the liberties, as soon as they fell vacant, were put up to auction in the office of the Milizia da Mar, and knocked down to the highest bidder. From this time forward, till the close of the Republic, purchase at auction from the government became the only way in which a man could obtain a license as gondolier. The government undertook the supervision of the registers, and any liberty that remained unoccupied through neglect, ill health, or death, was sold immediately.

Thus the *traghetto* lost the control over their liberties; and with that control disappeared the most important part of their functions and powers as a corporation. From that date to this, the government of the day has been the virtual owner of the liberties, and the final resort in all questions affecting their management. Until quite recently, a young gondolier might buy an old one out of his place at a good *traghetto*, for about three hundred *lire*; and the municipality readily sanctioned such exchanges. But the present town-council desire to put an end to this remnant of ancient privilege, and insist that they alone shall appoint and transfer, and that the gondoliers have no claim to initiative in the matter.

The regulations of the government on the subject of liberties restored comparative order to the *traghetto*, though

they could not alter human nature, and we come across occasional outbursts of the riotous spirit among the young gondoliers, who still bullied their passengers, and exacted more than their due centesimo for the fare across the ferry. In the year 1702, the censors threaten the whip, and other tortures, for those who carry pistols or knives in their boats; and, as late as 1800, one Francesco Pelizzari; distinguished himself by crowding twenty-nine unfortunate people into his gondola, and refusing to land them till they had paid *a modo suo*. For this exploit, however, he was banished from Venice.

The corporate life of the *traghetti* was closed by the action of the government in the Sixteenth Century. The schools survived, though with diminished vitality, until the extinction of the Republic; and even now certain of their functions are still performed by the modern *traghetti*. The *traghetti* are still friendly societies. A brother who falls ill receives a certain sum daily from the fraternity as long as his illness lasts; and the *gastaldo* and four brothers attend his funeral with torches, and accompany him to his last home at San Michele when he dies. The *bancali* are still the recognised heads of the *traghetti*, and hold their sittings in the wooden shelter huts at each ferry's end. But this is all that remains of an institution which was once among the most remarkable and complete of those that flourished under the Venetian Republic.

## THE GRAND CANAL

THÉOPHILE GAUTIER

THE Grand Canal is in Venice what the Strand is in London, the Rue Saint Honoré in Paris, and the Calle d'Alcala in Madrid,—the principal artery of the city's circulation. It is in the form of an S, the top curve of which sweeps through the city at St. Mark's, terminating at the island of St. Chiara, while the lower curve ends at the Custom House near the Giudecca canal. About the middle, this S is cut by the Rialto bridge.

The Grand Canal of Venice is the most wonderful thing in the world. No other town can afford such a beautiful, strange and fairy-like spectacle: perhaps equally remarkable specimens of architecture may be found elsewhere, but they never occur under such picturesque conditions. There every palace has a mirror to admire its beauty in, like a coquettish woman. The superb reality is doubled by a charming reflection. The waters lovingly caress the feet of those beautiful façades whose brows are kissed by white sunlight, and cradle them in a double sky. The little buildings and the big ships that can get so far seem to be moored expressly as a set-off, or as foregrounds for the convenience of decorators and water-colourists.

When passing the Custom House, which, with the Giustiniani palace, now the *Hotel de l'Europe*, forms the entrance



GRAND CANAL FROM THE SALUTE





of the Grand Canal, cast a glance at those fleshless horses' heads carved on the square and heavy cornice that supports the globe of Fortune: does this singular ornament signify that the horse being of no use in Venice people part with it at the Custom House, or is it rather merely a caprice of ornament? The latter explanation seems to us the best, for we are unwilling to fall into the symbolical refinings with which we have reproached others.

The Custom House is a fine building with rustic columns adorned with bossages and supporting a square tower terminated with two kneeling figures of Hercules back to back supporting on their robust shoulders a terrestrial globe upon which turns a nude figure of Fortune with hair hanging loose in front and bald behind, and holding in her hands the two ends of a veil that forms a vane and yields to the faintest breeze: for this figure is hollow, like the Giralda in Seville. Close to the *Dogana* rises the white cupola of Santa Maria della Salute with its twisted volutes, its pentagonal staircase and its population of statues. An Eve in most gallant undress smiled upon us from the top of a cornice bathed in sunlight. We immediately recognised the *Salute* from Canaletto's fine picture in the Louvre.

Every stretch of wall tells a story; every house is a palace; every palace is a masterpiece and a legend. With every stroke of his oar, the gondolier mentions a name that was as well known at the time of the Crusades as it is to-day; and this is true both on the right and left for more than half a league. We wrote down a list of these palaces, not all,

but the most noteworthy of them; and we dare not copy it on account of its length. It fills five or six pages: Pietro Lombardi, Scamozzi, Vittoria, Longhena, Andrea Tremignano, Giorgio Massari, Sansovino, Sebastiano Mazzoni, Sammichelli the great Veronese architect, Selva, Domenico Rossi, and Visentini drew the designs and directed the construction of these princely dwellings, without counting the wonderful unknown Mediæval artists who built the most romantic and picturesque ones, those that set the seal of originality upon Venice.

On both banks altogether charming façades of diversified beauty follow one another uninterruptedly. After one of Renaissance architecture, with its columns and superimposed orders, comes a Mediæval palace of Arabian-Gothic style, the prototype of which is the Ducal Palace, with its open balconies, its ogives, its trefoils, and its indented acroterium. Farther on is a façade plated with coloured marbles, and ornamented with medallions and consoles; then comes a great rose wall pierced with a wide window with little columns. Everything is to be found here: Byzantine, Saracen, Lombard, Gothic, Roman, Greek, and even Rococo; the column large and small, the ogive and the round arch, the capricious capital full of birds and flowers that has been brought from Acre or Jaffa; the Greek capital that was found among the ruins of Athens, the mosaic and the bas-relief, Classical severity and the elegant fancies of the Renaissance. It is an immense gallery open to the sky wherein one may study the art of seven or eight centuries from the interior of one's

gondola. What genius, talent and money have been expended in this space that we traverse in less than an hour! What prodigious artists, but also what intelligent and magnificent lords! What a pity it is that the patricians who knew how to get such beautiful things executed only exist now on the canvases of Titian, Tintoretto and Il Moro!

Before even arriving at the Rialto, you have on your left, going up the canal, the Dario palace, in the Gothic style; the Venier palace, which stands at angle, with its ornaments, its precious marbles and its medallions, in the Lombard style; the Fine Arts, a Classic façade coupled to the ancient Scuola della Carità surmounted by a Venice riding a lion; the Contarini palace, the architect of which was Scamozzi; the Rezzonico palace, with three superimposed orders; the triple Giustiniani palace in the Mediæval taste; the Foscari palace, which is recognisable by its low door, two stages of little columns supporting ogives and trefoils, in which the sovereigns who visited Venice were formerly lodged; the Balbi palace, over the balcony of which princes leaned to watch the regattas held on the Grand Canal with so much pomp and splendour in the halcyon days of the Republic; the Pisani palace, in the German style of the beginning of the Fifteenth Century; and the Tiepolo palace, which is relatively quite spruce and modern, with its two elegant pyramidions. On the right, close to the *Hotel de l'Europe*, between two big buildings is a delicious little palace which is chiefly composed of a window and a balcony; but what a window and what a balcony! A gimp of stonework, scrolls, guilloches and

pierced work that one would think impossible to produce except with a punch on one of those pieces of paper that are placed over lamp-globes.

Continuing up the canal, we find the following palaces: Corner della Ca' Grande, which dates from 1532, one of Sansovino's best; Grassi; Corner-Spinelli; Grimani, in the robust and strong architecture of Sammicheli, the marble base of which is surrounded by a Greek course of very fine effect; and Farsetti with a columned peristyle and a long gallery of little columns that occupies its whole front. We might say, as Don Ruy Gomez da Silva said to Charles the Fifth, in *Hernani*, when he is showing him the portraits of his ancestors: "I pass them by, and better ones too." We will, however, request favour for the Loredan palace and the ancient dwelling of Enrico Dandolo, the conqueror of Constantinople. Between these palaces there are houses that set them off, whose chimneys shaped like turbans, turrets and vases of flowers very happily break up the great architectural lines.

Sometimes a *traghetto*, or a *piazzetta*, such as the *campo* San Vitali, for example, which faces the Academy, appropriately cuts this long *suite* of monuments. This *campo*, lined with rough-coated houses of a strong and lively red, forms the happiest contrast with its vine branches of an inn arbour; this vermeil spot in this line of façades that have been more or less browned by time rests and delights the eye; some painter is always found established here with his palette on his thumb and his box on his knees. The gondoliers

and pretty girls who are attracted by the presence of these strange beings always pose naturally, and from admirers become professional models.

The Rialto, which is the finest bridge in Venice, has a very grandiose and monumental appearance: it spans the canal with a single arch of an elegant and bold curve. It was built by Antonio da Ponte, in 1691, when Pasquale Cigogna was Doge, and replaces the ancient wooden draw-bridge in Albert Dürer's plan of the city. Two rows of shops, separated in the middle by an arcaded portico, giving a glimpse of the sky, occupy the sides of the bridge that may be crossed by three ways: a central one and two outside pathways adorned with marble balustrades. About the Rialto bridge, which is one of the most picturesque points of the Grand Canal, are piled the oldest houses in Venice, with their flat roofs with poles for awnings, their tall chimneys, their bulging balconies, their staircases with disjointed steps, and their wide spaces of red plaster that have scaled off in places and left bare the brick wall, and the foundations that are green from the contact of the water. Near the Rialto, there is always a tumult of shipping and gondolas, and stagnant islets of moored small crafts drying their tawny sails that sometimes bear a great cross.

Beyond the Rialto on the two banks are grouped the old Fondaco dei Tedeschi, the walls of which tinted with uncertain hues enable us to divine the frescoes of Titian and Tintoretto, like dreams that are about to take flight; the Fish Market, the Herb Market, and the old and new con-

structions of Scarpagnino and Sansovino. These reddened and degraded buildings, admirably toned and tinted by time and neglect, must constitute the despair of the municipality and the delight of painters. Beneath their arcades swarms an active and noisy population, that mounts and descends, comes and goes, buys and sells, laughs and bawls. There fresh tunny is sold in red slices; and mussels, oysters, crabs and lobsters are carried away in baskets.

Under the arch of the bridge, where the noisiest echoes resound all around, the gondoliers sleep sheltered from the sun while waiting to be hired.

Still going up the Grand Canal, we see on the left the Corner della Regina palace, thus named after the queen Cornaro of Cyprus. The architecture by Domenico Rossi is of great elegance. The sumptuous abode of Queen Cornaro is now a pawn-shop, and the humble tatters of misery and the jewels of improvidence at the last extremity are piled up here beneath the rich ceilings that are indebted to them for not falling into ruins: for to-day it does not suffice to be beautiful, it is necessary to be useful as well.

The Armenian college, not very far away, is an admirable edifice, by Paldassare de Longhena of rich, solid and imposing architecture. It is the old Pesaro palace. To the right rises the Ca' d'Oro palace—one of the most charming on the Grand Canal. It belonged to Mlle. Taglioni, who had it restored with the most intelligent care. It is all embroidered and laced with open stonework in a mixed taste of Greek, Gothic and Barbarian; and is so fantastic, so light,



so ærial, that it might be said to have been made expressly for the nest of a sylph.

The old Vendramin Calergi palace, the most beautiful in Venice, is an architectural masterpiece, and its carvings are of marvellous fineness. Nothing can be prettier than the groups of children who hold shields over the arches of the windows. The interior is full of precious marbles: two porphyry columns of such rare beauty that their value would pay for the rest of the palace are particularly admired.

Although we have taken a long time, we have not yet said all. We notice that we have not spoken of the Mocenigo palace, where the great Byron lived. The Barberigo palace also deserves mention. It contains a number of beautiful pictures, and a carved and gilded cradle intended for the heir of the noble family, a cradle that might be made into a tomb, for the Barberigos are extinct as well as the majority of the old Venetian families. Of nine hundred patrician families inscribed in the Golden Book, scarcely fifty remain.

A few strokes of the oar soon brought into view one of the most marvellous spectacles that were ever given for the human eye to contemplate: the Piazzetta seen from the water. Standing on the prow of the stationary gondola, we looked for some time in mute ecstasy at this picture for which the world has no rival,—perhaps the only one that cannot be surpassed by the imagination.

On the left we see first the trees of the Royal garden that traces a green line above a white terrace; then the Zecca (the Mint) a building of robust architecture; and the old

library, (Sansovino's work) with its elegant arcades and crown of mythological statues.

On the right, separated by the space that forms the Piazzetta, the vestibule of St. Mark's Square, the Ducal Palace presents its vermeil façade lozenged with white and rose marble, its massive columns supporting a gallery of little pillars the ribs of which contain quatrefoils, with six ogival windows, and its monumental balcony ornamented with consoles, niches, bell-turrets and statuettes dominated by a Holy Virgin; its acroterium standing out against the blue of the sky in alternate acanthus leaves and points, and the spiral listel that binds its angles and ends in an open-work pinnacle.

At the end of the Piazzetta, besides the Library, the Campanile rises to a great height; this is an immense brick tower with a pointed roof surmounted by a golden angel. On the Ducal Palace side, St. Mark's, viewed sideways, shows a corner of its porch which faces the Piazzetta. The view is closed by a few arcades of ancient Procurators' offices and the Clock Tower with its bronze figures for striking the hours, its Lion of St. Mark on a starry blue blackground and its great blue dial on which the four and twenty hours are inscribed.

In the foreground, facing the gondola landing-place, between the Library and the Ducal Palace are two enormous columns of African granite, each in a single piece, that were formerly rose but have been washed into colder tones by rain and Time.

On the one to the left, coming from the sea, stands in a

triumphant attitude, with his brow encircled by a metal nimbus, his sword by his side and lance in hand, his hand resting on his shield, a finely proportioned St. Theodore slaying a crocodile.

On the column to the right, the Lion of St. Mark in bronze, with outspread wings, claw on his Gospel, and with scowling face turns his tail on St. Theodore's crocodile with the most sour and sullen air that can be expressed by a heraldic animal.

It is said not to be of good augury to land between these two columns, where executions formerly took place, and so we begged the gondolier to put us ashore at the Zecca stairs or the Paille bridge, as we did not want to end like Marino Faliero, whose misfortune it was to be cast ashore by a tempest at the foot of these dread pillars.

Beyond the Ducal Palace the new prisons are visible, joined to it by the Bridge of Sighs, a sort of cenotaph suspended above the Paille canal, then comes a curved line of palaces, houses, churches and buildings of all kinds that form the Riva dei Schiavoni (the Slave Quay), and is ended by the verdant clump of the public gardens, the point of which juts into the water.

Near the Zecca is the mouth of the Grand Canal and the front of the Custom House, which, with the public gardens, forms the two ends of this panoramic arc over which Venice extends, like a marine Venus drying on the shore the pearls salted by their natal element.

We have indicated as exactly as possible the principal

lineaments of the picture; but what should be rendered is the effect, the colour, the movement, the shiver in the air and water; life, in fact. How can one express those rose tones of the Ducal Palace that look as lifelike as flesh; those snowy whitenesses of the statues tracing their contours in the azure of Veronese and Titian; those reds of the Campanile caressed by the sun; those gleams of distant gold; those thousand aspects of the sea, sometimes clear as a mirror, sometimes scintillating with spangles, like the skirt of a dancer? Who can paint that vague and luminous atmosphere full of rays and vapours from which the sun does not exclude all shadows; that going and coming of gondolas, barks, and galliots; those red or white sails; those boats familiarly leaning their cutwaters against the quay, with their thousand picturesque accidents of flags, ropes and drying nets; the sailors loading and unloading the ships, carrying cases and rolling barrels, and the motley strollers on the wharf. Dalmatians, Greek, Levantines and others whom Canaletto would indicate with a single touch: how can one make it all visible simultaneously as it occurs in Nature, with a successive procedure? For the poet, less fortunate than the painter or the musician has only a single line at his disposal: the former has a whole palette, the latter an entire orchestra.

## THE PATRICIANS' PALACES

P. MOLMENTI

THE elegances of art have a great influence upon private manners. Towards the end of the Fifteenth Century the manifestations of taste were everywhere in evidence, and it might be said that even costume borrowed its forms from Art, which reigned everywhere,—in the modest dwelling of the poor as well as in the Doge's palace. Along with wealth was augmented the magnificence of the palaces that sprang from the waters as if by enchantment. In his *Voyage*, Constant says: "I do not speak of the multitude of great and beautiful and rich palaces, one of a hundred, another of fifty, and a third of thirty thousand ducats, nor of their owners, for it would be too hard a task for me, and one fitted only for a man who had to stay a long time in the said city of Venice." The annual rent of houses *for the use of nobles* was from fifty to one hundred and twenty gold ducats.

The interior of these mansions was in no way inferior to the exterior. The graceful twines of the arches and the spiral columns that support the ogives of the marble façades were reproduced in the interior ornamentation and in the furniture of the apartments that were not very spacious, but painted and decorated with severe elegance. The commonest utensil and the furniture of even the most trifling importance

had an artistic value. Splendid friezes ran around the upper portions of the rooms the ceilings of which "remarkable for their mouldings," as Sansovino says, and their arabesques, were sometimes of carved wood, gilded and coloured, and sometimes, after the style of the Thirteenth Century, with long and thick beams painted and carved in the style called *intelaradure alla tedesca*.

The walls covered with tanned, gilded or silvered leather, with ornaments and figures (*cuori d'oro*), or with silken hangings, sometimes embroidered with precious stones or striped with thin plates of gold; the folding doors, the jambs and lintels, all carved or incrustated; the chimney-pieces decorated with fantastic interlacings of foliage, chimeras, sirens and cupids in the Lombard taste:—everything was admirable for its richness or its exquisite form. Among other examples, there still exists in the Ducal Palace a wonderful model of Fifteenth Century mural decoration in the room *degli Scarlatti*, which at first was the Doge's room, and afterwards the place where the Twelve nobles, who wore scarlet robes, met. Around the ceiling, decorated with golden rose-work on a blue ground, runs an elegant frieze carved throughout; the chimney-piece, a work by Lombardo executed when Augustino Barbarigo was Doge, that is to say, between 1486 and 1501, is a masterpiece for the marvellous delicacy of its ornamentation, which twines in and out with supple elegance.

But what we have fewest examples of are the furniture and hangings, Time having consumed the greater part of these, and the mercantile spirit of the age having relinquished the





PALAZZO LOREDAN





remainder to foreigners. We will nevertheless endeavour to the best of our ability to reconstruct in imagination the interior of a patrician mansion of the Fifteenth Century. In the middle of the room usually occupied by the nobles were to be seen on the walnut table of chastened style, and along the walls or on brackets, in charming disorder, amphoræ, ceramics, gold and silver vases, great swords, medals, cymbals, lutes, and books bound in guilloched leather. The taste for the antique was already in the ascendant, and in glass cases were assembled the statuettes and other objects discovered in the excavations. Hanging from the ceilings, or fixed to the walls, gleamed lamps of Oriental style in gilded copper or bronze enamelled, inlaid, chased, and ornamented with crystal of a thousand hues; or lanterns adorned with little wreathed columns, closed with mirrors of various forms, which on the walls produced an effect of painting in *chiaroscuro*; or again lanterns of hammered iron with the most elegant volutes and open-work. In the libraries were preserved those precious parchment manuscripts whose pages painted with miniatures, with infinite patience in the silence of the cloisters, still breathe forth the amiable ingenuity of that period. The table-service was of gold and silver; the glasses and flasks of Murano had an individual transparence and elegance; even the copper vases used to cool the drinks were covered with strange damaskeening. The bedrooms served also as reception rooms. Around the mirrors, and magnificently hung beds, and alcoves supported by gilded caryatides, were framings of carved open woodwork, border-

ing panels, marquetry work and other ornaments of extreme delicacy. During the early years of the Sixteenth Century, the Doge's bed was covered with gold, and Contarini says, in describing the palace, that in the ducal chamber he saw the *lettiera coperta de aurea maiestate*. Beside the bed was placed the *Prie Dieu*, beneath those diptychs or little wooden altars with little open spires, and with saints with golden aureoles;—beautiful works on which the carver often cut his name beside that of Vivarini and others who had painted the images. The presses, coffers, *trousseaux* chests, jewel caskets for wedding presents (which on that account were justly called marriages), were carved or painted with domestic and battle scenes. People ran into such wild expenditure for the furnishings of an apartment that a law of 1476 ordered not more than 150 ducats of gold were to be spent on wood, gold and painting.

The Venetian palaces had several doors that did not all lead into the vestibule (*entrada*), but sometimes into vast courtyards surrounded with walls battlemented in the Arab fashion.<sup>1</sup> In these courtyards were wells with artistically sculptured curbs; and here were found those picturesque stairways without carcass that we still admire in the Sanudo Palace of St. Mary of the Miracles, the Capello Palace at St. John Lateran, the Centenni Palace at San Toma, etc., etc.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Foscari palace, for instance.

<sup>2</sup> A marvellous staircase, but one with a carcass, is the spiral staircase of the Contarini Palace at San Paterniano, known to-day under the name of *Scala a bovolo de Minelli*.

In the Sixteenth Century the change from the ideas of the Middle Ages to those of renascent Antiquity is already accomplished. Pagan grandeur revives in all its splendour. The demand for luxury grows more marked from day to day and in the interiors furniture becomes richer and less simple. Sansovino writes, towards the end of the Sixteenth Century: "As for the apartments, furniture and incredible riches, one cannot even imagine them, far less describe them clearly. . . . And although our elders were economical, they grew magnificent in the adornment of their dwellings. There are innumerable edifices with the ceilings of the chambers and other rooms gilded and painted, and covered with historical pictures and excellent fancies." Franco, also, in his turn, says: "The buildings of this city offer an admirable spectacle to one who looks at them from the outside. But when one sees the interiors, they are still more astonishing and wonderful, for they are adorned with very beautiful paintings, carvings, mouldings, tapestries, gold and silver and such a quantity of other precious ornaments, that, if a man wanted to enumerate them, those who have not seen them would take him for a liar." Riches, nevertheless, were never separated from beauty; and, moreover, there was no cessation in the invention of new forms of presses, credences, tables, chairs, doors and stools. Sansovino says: "In fact, nowhere else are to be seen more commodious, more concentrated, or more fit for man's use than these." The private life of that century was written in the pictures, tapestries and furniture; just as the public life was written in the monu-

ments. With time, luxury constantly became more external and was displayed principally in the state and reception rooms, each one of which could contain a whole modern apartment. From the vestibules, ornamented with mouldings and bas-reliefs, household goods gradually disappeared and the ancient arms were replaced by gigantic show halberds with handles covered with crimson velvet, studded with yellow leather and ornamented with red silk fringes and shining steel on which are engraved fruits, victories and trophies. On the landings of the staircases are statues, and fragments of antique columns with inscriptions. Even in the hall (or portico), are hung precious trophies of arms, gemmed shields and flags. The doors with casings of rare marble lead into great rooms where gold, velvet and silk reflect the light in a thousand ways upon the walls adorned with pictures by celebrated Venetian masters. The notices on the works of design of the first half of the Sixteenth Century, by an anonymous author believed to be Marc Antoine Michiel, and published by Morelli, show us the quantity of admirable works with which the walls then had to be hung.

## SANTA MARIA DELLA SALUTE

JOHN RUSKIN

SANTA MARIA DELLA SALUTE," Our Lady of Health, or of Safety, would be a more literal translation, yet not perhaps fully expressing the force of the Italian word in this case. The church was built between 1630 and 1680, in acknowledgment of the cessation of the plague:—of course to the Virgin, to whom the modern Italian has recourse in all his principal distresses, and who receives his gratitude for all principal deliverances.

The hasty traveller is usually enthusiastic in his admiration of this building; but there is a notable lesson to be derived from it which is not often read. On the opposite side of the broad canal of the Giudecca is a small church celebrated among Renaissance architects as of Palladean design, but which would hardly attract the notice of the general observer, unless on account of the pictures by John Bellini which it contains, in order to see which the traveller may perhaps remember having been taken across the Giudecca to the Church of the "Redentore." But he ought carefully to compare these two buildings with each other, the one built "to the Virgin," the other "to the Redeemer," also a votive offering after the cessation of the plague of 1576: the one, the most conspicuous church in Venice, its dome, the principal one by which she is first discerned, rising out of the distant

sea; the other, small and contemptible, on a suburban island, and only becoming an object of interest, because it contains three small pictures! For in relative magnitude and conspicuousness of these two buildings, we have an accurate index of the relative importance of the ideas of the Madonna and of Christ in the modern Italian mind.

The Church of Santa Maria della Salute on the Grand Canal, one of the earliest buildings of the Grotesque Renaissance, is rendered impressive by its position, size, and general proportions. These latter are exceedingly good; the grace of the whole building being chiefly dependent on the inequality of size in its cupolas, and pretty grouping of the two campaniles behind them. It is to be generally observed that the proportions of buildings have nothing whatever to do with the style or general merits of their architecture. An architect trained in the worst schools, and utterly devoid of all meaning or purpose in his work, may yet have such a natural gift of massing and grouping as will render all his structures effective when seen from a distance: such a gift is very general with late Italian builders, so that many of the most contemptible edifices in the country have good stage effect so long as we do not approach them. The Church of the Salute is farther assisted by the beautiful flight of steps in front of it down to the Canal; and its façade is rich and beautiful of its kind, and was chosen by Turner for the principal object in his well-known view of the Grand Canal. The principal faults of the building are the meagre windows in the sides of the cupola, and the ridiculous disguise of the





SANTA MARIA DELLA SALUTE, ITALY.



buttresses under the form of colossal scrolls; the buttresses themselves being originally a hypocrisy, for the cupola is stated by Lanzi to be of timber, and therefore needs none. The sacristy contains several precious pictures: the three on its roof by Titian, much vaunted, are indeed as feeble as they are monstrous; but the small Titian, *St. Mark, with Sts. Cosmo and Damian*, was, when I first saw it, to my judgment, by far the first work of Titian's in Venice. It has since been restored by the Academy, and it seemed to me entirely destroyed, but I had not time to examine it carefully.

At the end of the larger sacristy is the lunette which once decorated the tomb of the Doge Francesco Dandolo; and at the side of it, one of the most highly finished Tintorets in Venice, namely *The Marriage in Cana*, an immense picture, some twenty-five feet long by fifteen feet high, and said by Lanzi to be one of the few which Tintoret signed with his name.

## THE RIALTO

CHARLES YRIARTE

THE Rialto is one of the most popular names of Venice, and the one that, with the Lido, recurs most frequently in her history and popular songs. Originally, the spot where the Rialto rises was the heart of Venice, one of those islets of that group of islands which at a later period were to form Venice (Rivo-Alto); and the Rialto, as the old chronicles say, designated in a general way the site of the city. It was for a long time the only bridge thrown across the Grand Canal, serving as communication between the two large groups of islands divided by this Canal. From time immemorial (at least from the Twelfth Century), there was a wooden foot-bridge there, constantly repaired, until the day when the Signory, deciding to make the Rialto harmonise with the beautiful monuments of Venice, resolved to call the aid of the great architects and engineers of the time.

I have had the curiosity to search in the archives of Venice for sketches relating to the Rialto; the documents are extremely numerous, but do not go back further than the beginning of the Sixteenth Century; they give, however, most interesting details upon the construction of the bridge that exists to-day and original matter enough to gather the



THE RIALTO



history of the construction. For everything concerning the state of the building, or the history of the spot itself before the Sixteenth Century, recourse must be had to the Venetian chroniclers, and first of all to Sansovino. It is thought that from the Eighth Century, the necessity was felt for a more rapid means of passage between the groups of islands than by means of boats, and that, at a period which naturally remains uncertain but which must have been contemporary with the building of St. Mark's, a bridge composed of flat boats called *soleole* was formed at the Rialto.

In 1180, an engineer, Barattieri, whose name has been preserved, made of this temporary bridge a permanent one, and in 1260, the system of boats being definitively suppressed, piles were driven in and abutments constructed to bear, not a stone bridge, as some historians say, but a draw-bridge; and this is the bridge represented in Carpaccio's famous picture, *The Patriarch of Grado healing one possessed by an Evil Spirit*, which is in the Academy of Venice. In 1310, on the occasion of the conspiracy of Bajamonte Tiepolo, at the moment when the conspirators were about to seize the Ducal Palace, having found St. Mark's Place guarded, they fled precipitately to the other side of the Canal, and cut the bridge behind them to make their flight sure. Naturally, the bridge had to be rebuilt at once, but the work was done too rapidly, and a little more than a century later, on the occasion of the marriage of the Marquis of Ferrara, the festival was so uproarious that the bridge gave way under the crowd and serious injuries resulted. This being the only passage it was



too useful to remain interrupted for long; and they substituted for the broken bridge a large edifice filled up with shops on either side of the footway, and a water-passage for the large boats.

It is very interesting to see the real appearance of the Rialto of that time in the fine canvas of Carpaccio that I have just mentioned; here is an invaluable bit of evidence for the history of Venetian architecture. One might have expected the reconstructed bridge to be permanent; but any one who knows Venice and her history intimately will understand that the perpetual traffic demanded a still more substantial construction. The Fondaco dei Tedeschi rises on the right, the palaces of Camerlenghi on the left; the *Fabbriche nuove*, and the jewellers who have their shops there and the fish and vegetable vendors who are collected on either bank create such a continual going and coming that a very strong bridge is required to resist the strain. From 1525, nothing but complaints were heard about the precarious condition of this important bridge, and promises were made to substitute a durable edifice. Nothing was done till 1587; Fra Giocondo, the designer of Gaillon and the bridge of Notre-Dame, had once submitted a plan; Palladio had also made one in his turn; at last, on the 6th of December, 1587, the Senate invited a competition. As customary in Venice, a commission of inquiry was nominated, composed of three personages, all senators, whose especial task was to collect information and look for the anterior plans signed by Giorgio Spaventi, Fra Giocondo, Scarpa Guino, Jacopo Sansovino,

Andrea Palladio, Jacopo Barroccio da Vignola, and, it is said, by the great Michelangelo.

The best proof of the truth of the assertion that Michelangelo submitted a plan for this bridge, is furnished by the subject of a painting that adorns the Casa Buonarroti at Florence and which represents Michelangelo being received with honour by the Doge Andrea Gritti, and presenting to him a drawing for the Bridge of the Rialto.

Of the twenty-four plans of architects and engineers the committee pointed out to the Senate and Grand Council, the three that seemed most worthy, Scamozzi, Antonio da Ponte and Albisio Baldu. The work was entrusted to Da Ponte; it took three years to build and cost two hundred and fifty thousand ducats, or thirty thousand pounds of English money, which, at that time, was a considerable sum. Sansovino says that ten thousand pounds of elm timber would have to be driven in to a depth of sixteen feet; a large armed galley should be able to pass under the keystone of the arch with lowered mast, and withal the height of the bridge should not be great enough to render the communication between the two quarters of the town difficult.

The platform of the bridge is about twenty-four metres long; it is reached by an easy ascent of steps, and is wide enough to hold a row of shops under arcades, so that in reality it is a kind of suspended street, as lively as a market. The central arcade is left clear and forms an open gallery over the keystone of the bridge; between the parapet and the shops runs a balustraded passage supported on strongly pro-

jecting corbels. The span of the arch is twenty-seven metres, fifty centimetres, and its rise, from the usual level of the waters of the Grand Canal, measures seven metres.

The traveller who delights to linger on St. Mark's Place in the Basilica, at the Ducal Palace, and in the museums and churches should also halt long and frequently upon the Rialto; for it is certainly a unique corner: here crowd together, laden with fruit and vegetables, the black boats that come from the islands to provision Venice, the great hulls laden with *cocomeri*, *angurie*, with gourds and watermelons piled in coloured mountains; here, the gondolas jostle and the gondoliers chatter like birds in their Venetian idiom; here, too, are the fishermen in their busy, noisy, black market, an assemblage of strange craft and types of humanity; and as a pleasant contrast, on the steps of the bridge and stopping before the jewellers' shops are the girls, from the different quarters of Venice, from Canareggio, Dorso Duro, San Marco and Santa Croce, and from every quarter of the town, come to buy the coloured neckerchiefs with which they deck themselves, and jewellery of delicately worked gold, bright glass beads from Murano, or glass balls iridescent with green, blue and rose; while, wrapped in their old grey shawls that allow their wrinkled profiles and silvery locks to be seen, the old women of the Rialto drag their sandals over the steps and slip into the crowd, hiding under the folds of their aprons the strange food they have just bought from the open air vendors who sell their wares on the borders of the Rialto.

## THE CA' D'ORO

MAX DOUMIC

**T**HIS little palace on the Grand Canal known as the Ca' d'Oro<sup>1</sup> is one of the most charming buildings in Venice. It is one of the most striking specimens of that Venetian architecture which is the result of so many different influences that you can find neither laws nor principles, and which, though often disconcerting, always charms, perhaps indeed because it is subject to neither laws nor principles and permits the eye to be fascinated idly by the harmony of the design and the colour.

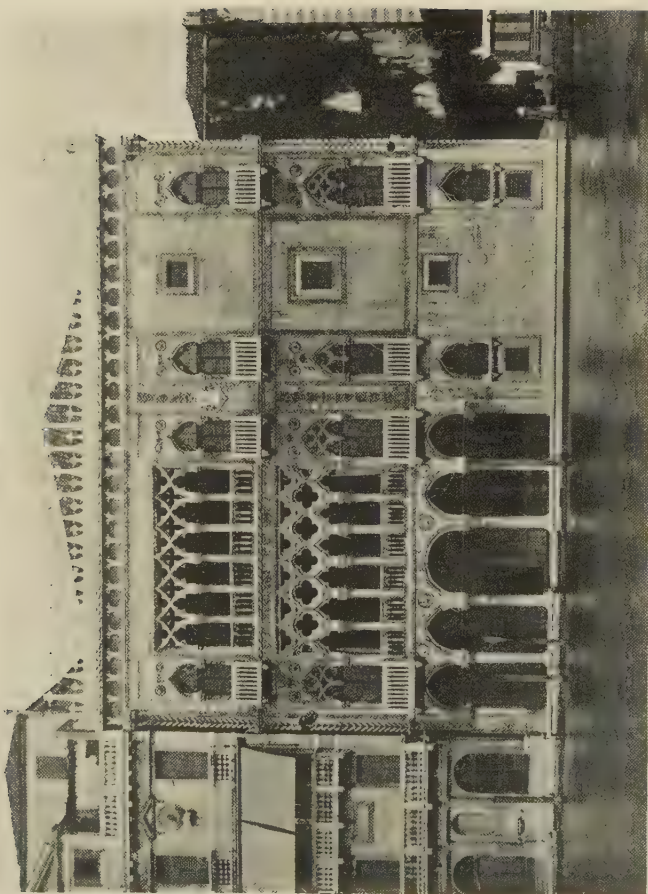
The history of the Ca' d'Oro is very obscure, at least its early history. It is thought that it received its name from the fact that its ornaments were originally gilded, traces of gilding being still found on the little lions that decorate the corners of the roof. Then others have attributed this appellation to the admiring tribute of a people possessed of a lively and poetic imagination. It seems far more probable, however, that this palace was built by the Doro family, and that this family becoming extinct in 1355 with Nicola Doro, condemned to death for having been concerned in Marino Faliero's conspiracy, popular tradition, while preserving the name of the palace, changed the origin of the name. This hypothesis seems to be confirmed by those golden lions which

<sup>1</sup> Ca d'Oro is the abbreviation of Casa d'Oro, the golden house.

ornament the façade, for the arms of the Doro family was a golden lion on a silver field.

After the sentence of Nicola Doro, his palace was confiscated by the Republic. It is supposed that it was given as a present to Pandolfe Malatesta, lord of Rimini, for it is well known that the Senate gave him a palace after he had ceded his seigniorship to the Republic, and moreover, Pandolfe's shield is found over a stairway leading to the second floor in the Ca' d'Oro. Official deeds tell us that this palace belonged to the Contarini and then to the Marcello, and about the middle of the Seventeenth Century it passed to the Bettignoli family. In the Nineteenth Century the celebrated Taglioni lived in it.

The architecture of the Ca' d'Oro has afforded much play to the imagination of archæologists, who, finding so many styles and influences here are too puzzled to classify it and dare not assign a date. In truth it is better not to fix a date for it and not to try to classify it at all. It is one of those old buildings that have been successively transformed by different generations: Time has covered these changes with its marvellous rust made of sunshine and dew and has harmonised them into a magnificent spectacle, and we ought to admire this spectacle as we admire a landscape without inquiring how it is made, and as we admire flowers without asking the age of the tree that bears them nor the tissues of which they are composed. The Ca' d'Oro is of this class, and we will now see how we are reduced to hypotheses as soon as we begin to analyse it.



THE CA' D'ORO





We are struck by the lack of symmetry in this little palace composed of two parts in juxtaposition, one of which is all open-work and the other gives the impression of a solid wall; we seek for an axis and it has been supposed that in the original plan the doors were intended to be in the centre of the composition and should be flanked on the left by a wing similar to that which exists on the right, and that on account of lack of money or difficulties with the neighbours, this wing was never built. This is hardly possible. It is difficult to admit that such a palace would have been constructed until all the necessary ground was acquired. If we hold to the idea that the plan was originally a symmetrical conception, we may suppose, on the contrary, that it originally had two wings. We know that the Contarini sold one part of their palace to Alvise Loredano and another part to the Marcello; the left wing would therefore be separated, and, passing to other owners, might have disappeared in the Seventeenth Century to make room for a new building. These, however, are only conjectures made according to modern ideas. In the Middle Ages, in Venice, as in France, they never thought of composing a façade according to any determined order; everybody planned his house according to his individual needs, and the façade was the natural expression of the interior arrangement. Examples are not lacking in Venice; the large windows that ornament the façades of the Doge's Palace on the Piazzetta and on the Riva degli Schiavoni have no axis and the other bays are not symmetrically disposed. There is every reason to believe that the Ca' d'Oro never was sym-

metrical, and that its architects did not consider its lack of symmetry a defect.

And now what style shall we connect it with? At the first glance we discover that the ground floor is of the Twelfth Century; the first of the Thirteenth, and the second of the Fourteenth; but this division is far from being clear. The composition will not permit us to admit that the palace is made of scraps of all kinds; we feel a style subsisting under all the changes; however, it is certain that the arches of the ground floor are not of the character as the capital they surmount, and the same thing occurs on the loggia of the second floor. In fact, this palace must date from the Twelfth Century, perhaps the Eleventh, but it was altered and almost entirely remodelled in the succeeding centuries. Of the original building only a few bits are left; the capitals of the loggia on the ground floor, some of the balustrades and certain details of sculpture that are imbedded in the walls of the wing. As for the shafts of the columns, they must have come from older buildings, to judge by the diversity of marbles they exhibit: marbles from Greece, brocatello and paronazzetto. The gallery of the first floor, dating from the Thirteenth Century, is the most perfect part, but it has been changed; the corners of the mouldings instead of turning round naturally, as they do in the upper part, are brusquely and awkwardly cut, and are spoiled by the neighbouring windows which seem to have been enlarged. The columns of the gallery on the second floor are crowned by arches that are thin in design, dry

and out of scale. The old cornice has been mutilated, but the few traces that remain of it show that it was made under the Arab influence, in imitation of the stalactitic cornices.

And so the architecture of the Ca' d'Oro has followed the history of Venetian architecture itself. It is certain that this palace was in its full splendour in the Thirteenth Century, and if we have the right to regret anything at all, it is that it has not survived as it was during this period.

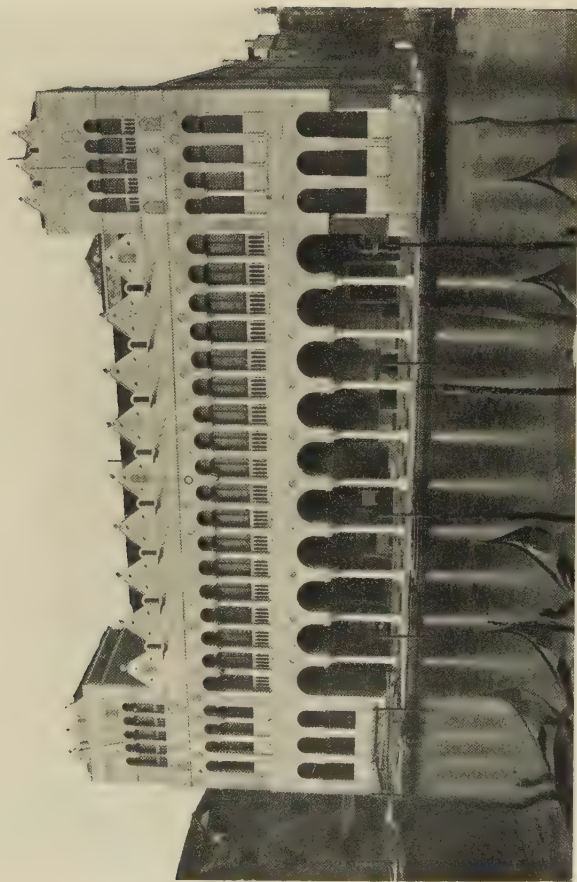
Is it necessary to add that here, as elsewhere, the most recent transformations have been the most unhappy? These are the projecting balconies that cut the ensemble and disfigure it, and the two twin windows with which the ground floor of the wing has been pierced.

## THE FONDACO DEI TURCHI AND THE FONDACO DEI TEDESCHI

CHARLES YRIARTE

FROM the Thirteenth Century, the Venetians had acquired such progress in commerce and had made such numerous treaties with the peoples of Europe and Asia that at certain periods the city was filled with strangers, attracted by exchange and commerce and who were entertained by their business acquaintances. The Senate anxious to develop everything that might contribute to the glory or wealth of Venice wished to facilitate the sojourn of all these strangers by establishing *fondachi*, or caravanserais, where they might be lodged gratuitously by presenting themselves to special magistrates, whose duty was to establish their identity and importance. The Germans were the first to have their Fondaco, which was situated on the Rialto itself and many times rebuilt, and of which, unfortunately only a mass of modern and characterless appearance is now to be seen.

Three nobles, with the title of Vis Domini, presided over the administration of establishments of this kind; there was a public weigher who took note of the weights and nature of the merchandise and classified it in the warehouses that belonged to the Fondaco. This was on the same principle as our docks with the exception that the owners of the



THE FONDACO DEI TURCHI



cargo were lodged in the building itself at the expense of the State. Next in importance to the weigher came the Fonticaio, or keeper of the building. In this same Thirteenth Century the Armenians were also favoured by the government; but a certain Marco Ziani, nephew of the Doge Sebastian, who had a deep affection for them, because his family had lived in Armenia for a long time, bequeathed to them his palace, the Ziani Palace, in the street of San Giuliano.

The Moors also had their Fondaco, near the Madonna del Orto on the *Campo dei Mori*, where a number of houses enriched with carvings of camels bearing merchandise and figures in Moorish costume may yet be seen.

The Turks, in the Seventeenth Century received for their share that superb palace on the Grand Canal which still bears the name Fondaco dei Turchi, and which the city has restored as the civic Correr Museum; this palace, one of the oldest and most curious in Venice, and which must be contemporary with the Ducal Palace and the façade of St. Mark's facing the lagoon, belonged to the Duke of Ferrara; but long before this, from the Fourteenth Century, the Turks had been provided for by the State in the street called Canareggio, and later in that of San Giovanni e Paolo, near the statue of Colleoni, one of the most beautiful spots in Venice, where the wonderful church of San Giovanni e Paolo stands. But it must not be forgotten that these Turks, so useful from a commercial point of view, were infidels, therefore the windows of their *fondaco* were or-



dered to be walled up; the rooms were lighted from an interior *patio*; an enclosing wall was erected, the two corner turrets, which might serve for defence, were razed, and a Catholic warder was stationed there who shut the doors at sunset. Women and children were forbidden to cross the threshold, arms and powder were deposited in a safe place in front of the entrance; and finally, to complete this series of prohibitions, it was forbidden to lodge an Ottoman in the city.

The Tuscans, who, as every one knows, were great merchants, and had become very wealthy by means of their banks and counting-houses, had their Fondaco on the Rialto; and the people of Lucca had theirs in the Via Bissa, in that part of town lying between the Rialto and San Giovanni Crisostomo.

The Greeks and Syrians were so numerous and on such good terms with the Venetians, that they lived all over the city. As for the Jews, who could not be excluded because of their peculiar aptitude for trade, they had been subjected to innumerable restrictions. As early as the Sixth Century they had arrogated the monopoly of money-changing, and the greater number of the princes, considering their own interests, encouraged them to live in their cities. In the Thirteenth Century, the Lombards and the Florentines had in their turn succeeded in getting the monopoly of large transactions; envy arose against those who were amassing and preserving such immense wealth; and finally the spirit of the Crusades, in awaking Christian sentiment, had also

excited public animosity against the Jews; Venice remained open to them and in profiting from this they perhaps abused this privilege, for we soon find them forced to take refuge at Mestre, the little country where to-day the railways from the north and south converge to enter Venice. But banks properly speaking did not yet exist; pawn-shops were not known, and, consequently, with a view to developing petty as well as large commercial interests and of encouraging business generally, the Senate decided to re-admit the Jews to the city. The time of their sojourn was limited, and they were compelled to wear a mark by which they could be recognised, which at first consisted of a piece of yellow material sewn on the breast, for which afterwards a yellow bonnet was substituted and later a bonnet the upper part of which was covered with red. They were forbidden to buy houses, lands or even furniture, or to practice noble arts (except, indeed, medicine). Cruel to these men, whom they sought out for their proverbial intelligence and by whose abilities they profited, the Senate assigned them, as at Rome, a special district to live in, the Corte delle Galli, between the streets of San Girolamo and San Geremia; they also gave it the customary name of Ghetto. They were obliged to pay dearly even for this unhealthy abode, and a wall was built around it to separate them from other citizens; they were exactly in the position that the Jews of Morocco are in to-day, forced to close their doors from sunrise to sunset, and with two Catholic warders paid out of their own money to keep watch over the place. On

holidays they were strictly forbidden to go out. Two armed ships guarded their outlets to the sea. They could not have a synagogue in Venice and were forced to go to Mestre, and for their burial-ground, they were grudgingly accorded an arid strip of beach on the lagoon.

We are, however, not concerned with the condition of the Jews in Venice, but merely with their commercial relations towards the subjects of the Republic; let us, therefore, return to the *fondachi*, or residences granted by the State to the representatives of foreign trade. Two *fondachi* have become famous and still remain in existence: that of the Turks and that of the Germans. The Fondaco dei Turchi still stands to-day on the Grand Canal, at San Giacomo dell' Orio.

Those who visited Venice thirty years ago, must have noticed, when going along the Grand Canal, this ancient building with its open loggia on the first story, ornamented with marble columns having Byzantine capitals. This antique façade, entirely covered with slabs of Greek marble and encrusted with circular escutcheons, was falling into ruin, and earth and moss were filling the interstices. During the long hours of the day, the Turkish custodian who still lived there, might be seen silently leaning against the last arch of the loggia in Oriental immobility, indifferent to the gondolas passing and repassing and upon which his eye rested without noticing them. A poet, unacquainted with that Oriental indifference, which looks like reverie and which does not engender a single dream, would

have said that his eyes were full of sorrow, and that he was musing on the Past and of the ancient glory of Venice. This building, known by the name of Fondaco dei Turchi, was built in the Thirteenth Century by the family of the Palmieri of Pesaro. Pietro Pesaro, the last ambassador of the Venetian Republic at Rome and the last of his name, could not bear to see the downfall of his country, and died in exile. The Pesaro were not always masters of this building. In 1331, it was bought by the Republic and given to the Marquises of Este, lords of Briare. Later, when they became the Dukes of Este, they gave in this building those splendid fêtes in which Ariosto and Tasso figured.

Pope Clement VIII. took possession of the beautiful domains of the Dukes of Ferrara, and gave them to his nephew, Cardinal Aldobrandini, who, in 1618, sold them to Antonio Priuli, Doge of Venice. The Republic, seeking a favourable locality for the sale of Turkish merchandise, hired Antonio Priuli's palace, which thus became the residence of the Turks and the *dépôt* of their merchandise. Extremely severe laws regulated its establishment. Finally, the Fondaco came back into the possession of the Pesaro, Maria Prioli having bought it as a dowry to her husband Leonardo Pesaro, Procurator of St. Mark's. The last descendant of the Pesaro bequeathed the Fondaco dei Turchi to the Count Leonardo Marini, his nephew, who sold it in 1828 to a contractor, who, in his turn, ceded it in 1859 to the city of Venice, which is now the owner. Count Sagredo, a Senator, was the first to become interested in this palace.

He wrote an excellent monograph upon it, in which the portions relating to art were treated by the skilful architect Frédéric Berchet, who with great care and true feeling, proposed plans for restoring it. The commission under the direction of the first Count Alessandro Marcello, and then of Count Luigi Benito, welcomed the project; the latter began the execution of it, which was carried on with precision and promptitude. In addition to the Chevalier Berchet, who made a great reputation for himself by this work, we should mention the superintendent of the work, Sebastian Cadet, and the sculptor, Jacopo Spura, who restored the ancient marbles and preserved all their artistic distinction. After so many vicissitudes, this ancient building, so intelligently restored, is now to remain forever the Museum of Venice.

The Fondaco of the Germans (Fondaco dei Tedeschi), has been so disfigured by successive restorations that it is necessary to consult history and also to make an effort of the imagination, before you can bring yourself to give attention to this large and massive palace, deprived of ornamentation, without elegance of form and without proportion, that rises on the left of the Rialto Bridge coming from the railway. Tradition says that at the beginning of the Sixteenth Century, its exterior was splendidly decorated with frescoes from the brushes of Giorgione and Titian. This is the first we hear of Giorgione's name as the decorator of the exterior of a palace; but as the Senate *d'ordine pubblico* had decided to ornament the *fondaco*, it is quite certain

that the famous Barbarelli, that great poet of colour and form, would have been employed. It would be interesting to search the official records in the archives of the Frari for the financial accounts of the Fondaco, which should certainly be there, and learn if really these great lords and politicians employed Giorgione's genius for this work. But without turning over the leaves of the archives, we may accept the assertions of the great writers and the monographs on Venice, that speak of having still in their time seen this splendid decoration, defaced and ruined indeed, but still showing the incontestable marks of this master's genius. Selvatico has left an account of the Fondaco dei Tedeschi; he attributes this building to Fra Giocondo, the famous Dominican who built the Consular Palace at Verona, and the Château de Gaillon in Normandy, one façade of which has been transported to the court of the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris. It seems that from time immemorial the Fondaco existed on its present site, and when, in 1540, a considerable fire destroyed the building, the Senate, anxious to show its interest in the cause of commerce in general, and also for a nation to which Venice had been bound by close commercial relations for many centuries, ordered that a new building of a regular form should be rebuilt. But, if Selvatico pretends that Fra Giocondo was the architect chosen by the Signory, other documents show that Girolamo Tedesco was given the order. After describing the building and its position on the Grand Canal, with its entrance to the sea and its flight of stairs on the water for

unloading the merchandise, Selvatico expresses himself in words that leave no doubt as to the richness of the decoration: "The profile of the windows is poor, but they are arranged symmetrically enough to produce a simple and noble effect; and indeed they needed no further ornament, since all the plain parts of the walls were covered with splendid frescoes by Giorgione and Titian, frescoes that have been almost entirely destroyed by the hand of man and the agency of time together. At the two angles of the façade overlooking the canal, there once stood two towers, upon which might be read two important inscriptions. But a few years ago, when the building was restored, the two towers were overthrown, the inscriptions effaced, and what is still more irreparable, two magnificent figures by Giorgione which might be regarded as the best preserved of all, were destroyed."



## VIEW FROM THE CAMPANILE

HENRY HAVARD

LET us ascend the Campanile. This has its one entrance on the Piazza opposite the Procuratie Vecchie. Formerly this entrance was carefully guarded, for the Campanile was to some degree the belfry of the city. The great bells at its summit, which we shall presently see, were charged with calling the citizens to arms, to announce danger to the troops and to inform the *arsenalotti* to mount guard. The possession of the Campanile was a guarantee of the security of the Ducal government. Therefore, during every conspiracy that broke out in Venice, the conspirators tried to seize it: some, like Querini, Tiepolo and Marino Faliero, so as to ring the bells; others, like the Count of Bédemar, to be assured of their silence. But, it is quite remarkable that neither one nor the other was able to succeed in this plan: the Campanile remained ever faithful to those whom its mission was to protect.

The first platform, the one in which the bells are found, is eighty metres high. But do not be alarmed; the ascent is not very fatiguing. The Campanile in reality is composed of two square towers placed one upon another joined by a flight of stairs of easy slope and which has but one step at each turn. It is a passage of slight inclination upon

which you could mount on horseback and climb up to the very top by this means more easily and with less risks than the gondolier Santo. However, let us hasten to remark that it is hardly out of consideration for those quadrupeds almost unknown in Venice, that the Campanile was thus constructed. Neither was it for the poor ecclesiastics who had to expiate their crimes midway up the monument, for they never went by this path to their aërial prison. They were shut up in a wooden cage at the foot of the tower and thence hoisted half way up to the summit. Accustomed to all kinds of intemperance, they now had no provision but bread and water, and were left for long months in this place to meditate upon the fragility of human dignity and to contemplate at their pleasure the splendours of nature. Then they were brought down to receive some fresh provisions and taken back again until they had expiated their transgressions. But while chattering, we have reached the first platform. Attention now!

First we are dazzled! This is certainly one of the most marvellous panoramas in the whole world that suddenly breaks upon us. Let us first look at the Adriatic side: at our feet is the Ducal Palace, the old Library, the Riva degli Schiavoni, and the Zecca; all these are embraced in one glance, but so small indeed that the buildings look like marble coffers whose covers are plated with lead, and the large columns of the Piazzetta, with the lion and saint surmounting them, appear to be two granite ninepins, or still better two pieces borrowed from a huge chess-board. All



VIEW FROM THE CAMPANILE



around us we perceive restless movement like a swarm of ants,—these are the promenaders enjoying the freshness of the morning; then on the water black blots with red centres,—these are the barks that are crowding each other the whole length of the Piazzetta. Farther away the gondolas spin over the emerald sea leaving a silvery track behind them, and from this height you would say that they are insects that are skimming over the surface of the water.

Still further away, the island of San Giorgio Maggiore, with its elegant church and its heavy barracks, has the look of ship stranded at the port of entrance. Its marble façade, its round dome, and its rose-coloured walls complacently reflect themselves in the transparent waves which come to leave the print of their wet green kisses upon its white steps.

To the right, the Giudecca winds majestically, displaying its granite quays, its variegated roofs, its houses and its churches. Nearer the Dogana di Mare advances proudly into the sea. Its columns, its statues and its golden dome which glitters in the sunshine gloriously mark the entrance to the Grand Canal; and behind it, the Salute, with its elegant dome, its enormous volutes and its marble steps, seems to watch over the health of the city.

To the left is that marvellous horn that we have admired when coming in from the Adriatic. Formed by the Riva degli Schiavoni and the palaces that border it, then by the Ca di Dio and San Bragio quays, with their picturesque dwellings, it is terminated by the public garden which lifts

up its great round masses of foliage and its green cones behind a marble balustrade. This mass of verdure worthily ends this superb promontory and majestically shuts out the horizon; and this great basin, with its girdle of temples and palaces has the appearance of a magic cup filled to the brim with joy and pleasure. Then beyond this enclosure of marble and verdure extends the immense lagoon, with San Lazzaro, and the old Lazaret, Santa Elena, and Santa Elisabetta, the Grazia, San Spirito and San Clemente, gaily situated in the midst of green waves. And farther away, indeed quite far, behind Malamocco and its narrow *littrorale*, behind Pelestrina, which is lost in the mist, the Adriatic with its tender reflections, with its undecided horizon, the Adriatic of an indescribable sweetness, forms the background of this superb picture.

Let us take a look on the other side now. If the spectacle is less beautiful, less pompous and less splendid, it is not less interesting. Here is a mass of red and grey roofs, a large collection of tiles, slate and lead an inextricable confusion of lines that cross and mingle and cut one another in every sense. To see such a number of houses crowded and heaped together in such a narrow space, it seems that they must have been thrown there at haphazard without any order, systematic plan, or preconceived idea. There are no streets, no canals, no squares. Every now and then there is the façade of a church, the cornice of a palace, or the gallery of a cloister. Then come campaniles, towers, belfries and steeples. Do not try to count them, for this would be a

tiresome task. Formerly Venice numbered two hundred churches; to-day, hardly ninety are in working-order. But if the clergy have departed, the steeples remain, and still throw their shadows upon the neighbouring houses. Their leaning spires dominate the confused heap of roofs and terraces, and these succeed one another without interruption until the sea comes brusquely to interrupt everything with its silver girdle.

At the foot of the Campanile we perceive the square of St. Mark's with its galleries and promenaders, its white flags that look like a chessboard and its pigeons that blot it with black spots. Then comes the church with its mosaics on a golden background, shining in the sun, with all its columns and its swelling dome. Then the clock-tower, with its golden lion, its starry dial and its bronze giants that seem to be pygmies. Those are tall masts that seem to be rods. Then if we suddenly lift our eyes beyond the houses, palaces, belfries and churches, there are the lagoons and the green sea with its silvery reflections, sprinkled with islands, with Murano, which seems to be a miniature Venice, and with the cemetery which you would take for a flower-garden. To the right, to the left,—everywhere, there are batteries and ports to protect the approaches to the city. There are San Giacomo, Tessera and Campalto, which by their crossed fire rendered Venice impregnable. There are the batteries of Rossarol, San Antonio and San Marco which isolated her from the mainland and rendered access impossible.



Beyond the Malghera fort, do you not see Mestre, then Spinea, Zellarino, Tavarò, Gambaraze and their clock-towers? And behind, losing themselves in the transparent mist, the bronzed Alps with their crowns of snow and the bluish peaks of the Vizentine Mountains. If the sky and atmosphere were clearer, we could see the Gulf of Trieste, the coasts of Istria and the Italian coast from the Po di Goro as far as Tagliamento. Perhaps, indeed, with "the eyes of faith," we might like the President of the Brosses perceive "Epirus and Macedonia, Greece, the Archipelago, Constantinople, the sultan's favourite and His Royal Highness toying with her." But let us not complain. It is this luminous haze that gives Venice that intensity of colour that charms us. It is that which intercepting the rays of the sun spreads around us that golden dust. Let us bless it then with all our might and be content with the marvels that unfold beneath our eyes.

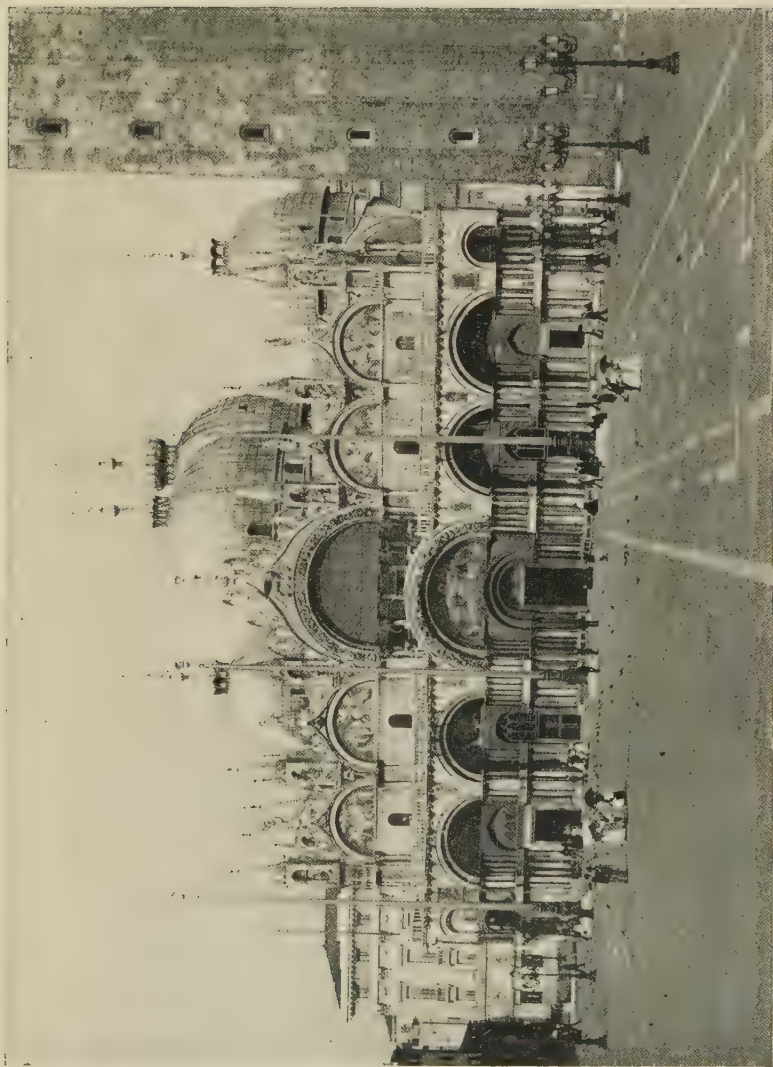
## ST. MARK'S

JOHN RUSKIN

**A** YARD or two farther, we pass the hostelry of the Black Eagle, and, glancing as we pass through the square door of marble, deeply moulded, in the outer wall, we see the shadows of its pergola of vines resting on an ancient well, with a pointed shield carved on its side; and so presently emerge on the bridge and Campo San Moisè, whence to the entrance into St. Mark's Place, called the Bocca di Piazza (mouth of the square), the Venetian character is nearly destroyed, first by the frightful façade of San Moisè, and then by the modernising of the shops as they near the Piazza, and the mingling with the lower Venetian populace of lounging groups of English and Austrians. We will push fast through them into the shadow of the pillars at the end of the "Bocca di Piazza," and then we forget them all; for between those pillars there opens a great light, and, in the midst of it, as we advance slowly, the vast tower of St. Mark seems to lift itself visibly forth from the level field of chequered stones; and, on each side, the countless arches prolong themselves into ranged symmetry, as if the rugged and irregular houses that pressed together above us in the dark alley had been struck back into sudden obedience and lovely order, and all their rude casements and broken walls had been transformed into

arches charged with goodly sculpture and fluted shafts of delicate stone.

And well may they fall back, for beyond those troops of ordered arches there rises a vision out of the earth, and all the great square seems to have opened from it in a kind of awe, that we may see it far away;—a multitude of pillars and white domes, clustered into a long, low pyramid of coloured light; a treasure-heap, it seems, partly of gold, and partly of opal and mother-of-pearl, hollowed beneath into five great vaulted porches, ceiled with fair mosaic, and beset with sculpture of alabaster, clear as amber and delicate as ivory,—sculpture fantastic and involved, of palm leaves and lilies, and grapes and pomegranates, and birds clinging and fluttering among the branches, all twined together into an endless network of buds and plumes; and, in the midst of it, the solemn forms of angels, sceptred, and robed to the feet, and leaning to each other across the gates, their figures indistinct among the gleaming of the golden ground through the leaves beside them, interrupted and dim, like the morning light as it faded back among the branches of Eden, when first its gates were angel-guarded long ago. And round the walls of the porches there are set pillars of variegated stones, jasper and porphyry, and deep-green serpentine spotted with flakes of snow, and marbles, that half refuse and half yield to the sunshine, Cleopatra-like, “their bluest veins to kiss”—the shadow, as it steals back from them, revealing line after line of azure undulation, as a receding tide leaves the waved sand; their capitals rich with interwoven tracery,



ST. MARK'S.



rooted knots of herbage, and drifting leaves of acanthus and vine, and mystical signs, all beginning and ending in the Cross; and above them, in the broad archivolts, a continuous chain of language and of life—angels, and the signs of heaven, and the labours of men, each in its appointed season upon the earth; and above them, another range of glittering pinnacles, mixed with white arches edged with scarlet flowers,—a confusion of delight, amidst which the breasts of the Greek horses are seen blazing in their breadth of golden strength, and the St. Mark's Lion, lifted on a blue field covered with stars, until at last, as if in ecstasy, the crests of the arches break into a marble foam, and toss themselves far into the blue sky in flashes and wreaths of sculptured spray, as if the breakers on the Lido shore had been frost-bound before they fell, and the sea-nymphs had inlaid them with coral and amethyst.

Between that grim cathedral of England and this, what an interval! There is a type of it in the very birds that haunt them; for, instead of the restless crowd, hoarse-voiced and sable-winged, drifting on the bleak upper air, the St. Mark's porches are full of doves, that nestle among the marble foliage, and mingle the soft iridescence of their living plumes, changing at every motion with the tints, hardly less lovely, that have stood unchanged for seven hundred years.

And what effect has this splendour on those who pass beneath it? You may walk from sunrise to sunset, to and fro, before the gateway of St. Mark's, and you will not

see an eye lifted to it, nor a countenance brightened by it. Priest and layman, soldier and civilian, rich and poor, pass by it alike regardlessly. Up to the very recesses of the porches, the meanest tradesmen of the city push their counters; nay, the foundations of its pillars are themselves the seats—not “of them that sell doves” for sacrifice, but of vendors of toys and caricatures. Round the whole square in front of the church there is almost a continuous line of *cafés*, where the idle Venetians of the middle classes lounge, and read empty journals; in its centre the Austrian bands play during the time of vespers, their martial music jarring with the organ notes,—the march drowning the miserere, and the sullen crowd thickening around them,—a crowd which, if it had its will, would stiletto every soldier that pipes to it. And in the recesses of the porches, all day long, knots of men of the lowest classes, unemployed and listless, lie basking in the sun like lizards; and unregarded children,—every heavy glance of their young eyes full of desperation and stony depravity, and their throats hoarse with cursing,—gamble, and fight, and snarl, and sleep, hour after hour, clashing their bruised *centesimi* upon the marble ledges of the church porch. And the images of Christ and His angels look down upon it continually.

That we may not enter the church out of the midst of the horror of this, let us turn aside under the portico which looks towards the sea, and passing round within the two massive pillars brought from St. Jean d’Acre, we shall find the gate of the Baptistery; let us enter there. The heavy



door closes behind us instantly, and the light and the turbulence of the Piazzetta, are together shut out by it. Let us enter the church itself. It is lost in still deeper twilight, to which the eye must be accustomed for some moments before the form of the building can be traced; and then there opens before us a vast cave hewn out into the form of a Cross, and divided into shadowy aisles by many pillars. Round the domes of its roof the light enters only through narrow apertures like large stars; and here and there a ray or two from some far away casement wanders into the darkness, and casts a narrow phosphoric stream upon the waves of marble that heave and fall in a thousand colours along the floor. What else there is of light is from torches or silver lamps, burning ceaselessly in the recesses of the chapels; the roof sheeted with gold, and the polished walls covered with alabaster, give back at every curve and angle some feeble gleaming to the flames; and the glories round the heads of the sculptured saints flash out upon us as we pass them, and sink again into the gloom. Under foot and overhead, a continual succession of crowded imagery, one picture passing into another, as in a dream; forms beautiful and terrible mixed together; dragons and serpents, and ravening beasts of prey, and graceful birds that in the midst of them drink from running fountains and feed from vases of crystal; the passions and the pleasures of human life symbolised together, and the mystery of its redemption; for the mazes of interwoven lines and changeful pictures lead always at last to the Cross, lifted and

carved in every place and upon every stone; sometimes with the serpent of eternity wrapt round it, sometimes with doves beneath its arms, and sweet herbage growing forth from its feet; but conspicuous most of all on the great rood that crosses the church before the altar, raised in bright blazonry against the shadow of the apse. And although in the recesses of the aisles and chapels, when the mist of the incense hangs heavily, we may see continually a figure traced in faint lines upon their marble, a woman standing with her eyes raised to heaven, and the inscription above her, "Mother of God," she is not here the presiding deity. It is the Cross that is first seen, and always, burning in the centre of the temple; and every dome and hollow of its roof has the figure of Christ in the utmost height of it, raised in power, or returning in judgment.

Nor is this interior without effect on the minds of the people. At every hour of the day there are groups collected before the various shrines, and solitary worshippers scattered through the darker places of the church, evidently in prayer both deep and reverent, and, for the most part, profoundly sorrowful. The devotees at the greater number of the renowned shrines of Romanism may be seen murmuring their appointed prayers with wandering eyes and unengaged gestures; but the step of the stranger does not disturb those who kneel on the pavement of St. Mark's; and hardly a moment passes, from early morning to sunset, in which we may not see some half-veiled figure enter beneath the Arabian porch, cast itself into long abasement on the floor

of the temple, and then rising slowly with more confirmed step, and with a passionate kiss and clasp of the arms given to the feet of the crucifix, by which the lamps burn always in the northern aisle, leave the church as if comforted.

The perception of colour is a gift just as definitely granted to one person and denied to another as an ear for music; and the very first requisite for true judgment for St. Mark's, is the perfection of that colour-faculty which few people ever set themselves seriously to find out whether they possess or not. For it is on its value as a piece of perfect and unchangeable colouring, that the claims of this edifice to our respect are finally rested; and a deaf man might as well pretend to pronounce judgment on the merits of a full orchestra, as an architect trained in the composition of form only, to discern the beauty of St. Mark's.

It would be easier to illustrate a crest of Scottish mountain, with its purple heather and pale harebells at their fullest and fairest, or a glade of Jura forest, with its floor of anemone and moss, than a single portico of St. Mark's. The balls in the archivolt project considerably, and the interstices between their interwoven bands of marble are filled with colours like the illuminations of a manuscript; violet, crimson, blue, gold, and green alternately: but no green is ever used without an intermixture of blue pieces in the mosaic, nor any blue without a little centre of pale green; sometimes only a single piece of glass a quarter of an inch square, so subtle was the feeling for colour which was thus to be satisfied. The intermediate circles have

golden stars set on an azure ground, varied in the same manner; and the small crosses seen in the intervals are alternately blue and subdued scarlet, with two small circles of white set in the golden ground above and beneath them, each only about half an inch across (this work, remember, being on the outside of the building, and twenty feet above the eye), while the blue crosses have each a pale green centre.

From the vine-leaves of that archivolt, though there is no direct imitation of nature in them, but on the contrary a studious subjection to architectural purpose, we may yet receive the same kind of pleasure which we have in seeing true vine-leaves and wreathed branches traced upon golden light; its stars upon their azure ground ought to make us remember, as its builder remembered, the stars that ascend and fall in the great arch of the sky: and I believe that stars, and boughs, and leaves, and bright colours are everlastingly lovely and to be by all men beloved; and, moreover, that church walls grimly seared with squared lines, are not better nor nobler things than these. I believe the man who designed and the men who delighted in that archivolt to have been wise, happy, and holy.

Now there is one circumstance to which I must direct the reader's special attention, as performing a notable distinction between ancient and modern days. Our eyes are now familiar and wearied with writing; and if an inscription was put upon a building, unless it be large and clear, it is ten to one whether we ever trouble ourselves to decipher it. But the old architect was sure of readers. He knew that

every one would be glad to decipher all that he wrote; that they would rejoice in possessing the vaulted leaves of his stone manuscript; and that the more he gave them, the more grateful would the people be. We must take some pains, therefore, when we enter St. Mark's, to read all that is inscribed, or we shall not penetrate into the feeling either of the builder or of his times. On the vault between the first and second cupolas are represented the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ, with the usual series of intermediate scenes,—the treason of Judas, the judgment of Pilate, the crowning with thorns, the descent into Hades, the visit of the women to the Sepulchre, and the apparition to Mary Magdalene. The second cupola itself, which is the central and principal one of the church, is entirely occupied by the subject of the Ascension. At the highest point of it Christ is represented as rising into the blue heaven, borne up by four angels, and throned upon a rainbow, the type of reconciliation. Beneath him, the twelve apostles are seen upon the Mount of Olives, with the Madonna, and, in the midst of them, the two men in white apparel who appeared at the moment of the Ascension, above whom, as uttered by them, are inscribed the words: "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This Christ, the Son of God, as He is taken from you, shall so come, the arbiter of the earth, trusted to do judgment and justice."

Beneath the circle of apostles, between the windows of the cupola, are represented the Christian virtues, as sequent

upon the crucifixion of the flesh, and the spiritual ascension together with Christ. Beneath them on the vaults which support the angles of the cupola, are placed the four Evangelists, because on their evidence our assurance of the fact of the ascension rests; and, finally, beneath their feet, as symbols of the sweetness and fulness of the Gospel which they declared, are represented by the four rivers of Paradise, Pison, Gihon, Tigris, and Euphrates.

The third cupola, that over the altar, represents the witness of the Old Testament to Christ; showing him enthroned in its centre and surrounded by the patriarchs and prophets. But this dome was little seen by the people; their contemplation was intended to be chiefly drawn to that of the centre of the church, and thus the mind of the worshipper was at once fixed on the main groundwork and hope of Christianity—"Christ is risen," and "Christ shall come." If he had time to explore the minor lateral chapels and cupolas, he could find in them the whole series of New Testament history, the events of the Life of Christ, and the Apostolic miracles in their order, and finally the scenery of the Book of Revelation; but if he only entered, as often the common people do to this hour, snatching a few moments before beginning the labour of the day to offer up an ejaculatory prayer, and advanced but from the main entrance as far as the altar screen, all the splendour of the glittering nave and variegated dome, if they smote upon his heart, as they might often, in strange contrast with his reed cabin among the shallows of the lagoon, smote upon it only that they

might proclaim the two great messages—"Christ is risen," and "Christ shall come." Daily, as the white cupolas rose like wreaths of sea-foam in the dawn, while the shadowy campanile and frowning palace were still withdrawn into the night, they rose with the Easter Voice of Triumph—"Christ is risen"; and daily, as they looked down upon the tumult of the people, deepening and eddying in the wide square that opened from their feet to the sea, they uttered above them the sentence of warning,—“Christ shall come.”

And this thought may surely dispose the reader to look with some change of temper upon the gorgeous building and wild blazonry of that shrine of St. Mark's. He now perceives that it was in the hearts of the old Venetian people far more than a place of worship. It was at once a type of the Redeemed Church of God, and a scroll for the written word of God. It was to be to them, both an image of the Bride, all glorious within, her clothing of wrought gold; and the actual Table of the Law and the Testimony, written within and without. And whether honoured as the Church or as the Bible, was it not fitting that neither the gold nor the crystal should be spared in the adornment of it; that, as the symbol of the Bride, the building of the wall thereof should be of jasper, and the foundations of it garnished with all manner of precious stones; and that, as the channel of the Word, that triumphant utterance of the Psalmist should be true of it—"I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as much as in all riches"? And shall we not look with changed temper down the long per-



spective of St. Mark's Place towards the sevenfold gates and glowing domes of its temple, when we know with what solemn purpose the shafts of it were lifted above the pavement of the populous square? Men met there from all countries of the earth, for traffic or for pleasure; but, above the crowd swaying forever to and fro in the restlessness of avarice or thirst of delight, was seen perpetually the glory of the temple, attesting to them, whether they would hear or whether they would forbear, that there was one treasure which the merchantmen might buy without a price, and one delight better than all others, in the word and the statutes of God. Not in the wantonness of wealth, not in vain ministry to the desire of the eyes or the pride of life, were those marbles hewn into transparent strength, and those arches arrayed in the colours of the iris. There is a message written in the dyes of them, that once was written in blood; and a sound in the echoes of their vaults, that one day shall fill the vault of heaven,—“He shall return, to do judgment and justice.” The strength of Venice was given her, so long as she remembered this: her destruction found her when she had forgotten this; and it found her irrevocably, because she forgot it without excuse. Never had city a more glorious Bible. Among the nations of the North, a rude and shadowy sculpture filled their temples with confused and hardly legible imagery; but, for her the skill and the treasures of the East had gilded every letter, and illumined every page, till the Book-Temple shone from afar off like the star of the Magi.

## *THE SCULPTURES ON THE FAÇADES OF ST. MARK'S*

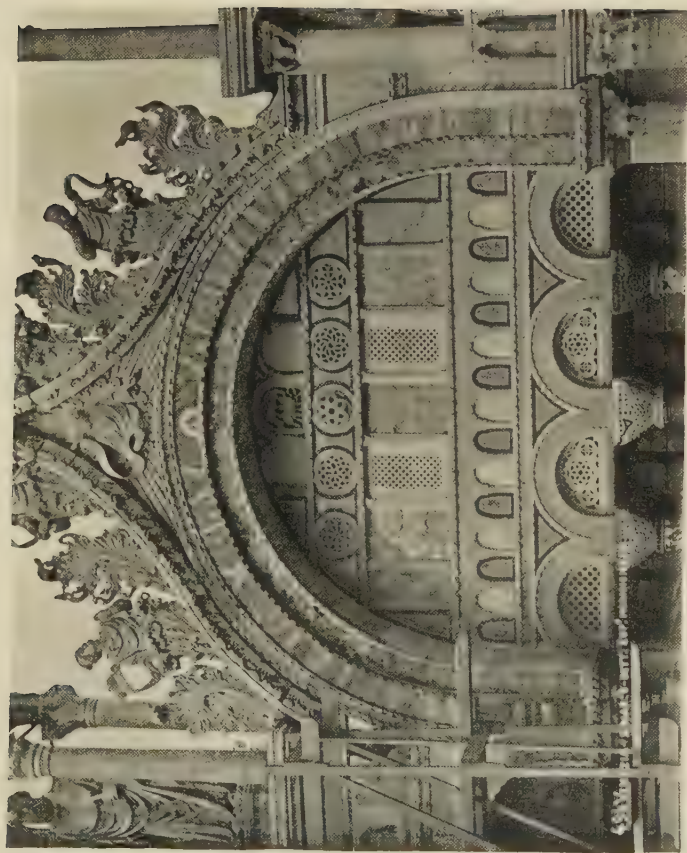
*JEAN PAUL RICHTER*

**I**N the following attempt to investigate the principal or west façade, as well as the north and south lateral façades of St. Mark's, it must be understood, that no remarks will be made on the architectural construction and decorations of the church, although it would not be impossible to enter upon such a discussion of this unique monument from fresh and altered points of view. To many among those who are accustomed to look on it as a superlative work of art, or, it may be, as one of the "seven wonders of the world," this course may appear strange. We may even seem to be straying from the subject altogether in thus ignoring architecture when proposing to discuss this wonder of architecture. In deprecation of such a charge, I beg to remark beforehand that it is only a lacuna in the art literature relating to St. Mark which it is here attempted to supply.

A slight examination of the reliefs on the façade is sufficient to show that they contain examples of the styles of eight different centuries, beginning with the Fourth. Several of them have inscriptions, but unhappily none with the names of the artists. Nor do the numerous descriptions of St. Mark's which have been published give any clue

whatever to the origin of the reliefs. Indeed, they scarcely ever mention them. F. Sansovino, in his *Venetia città nobilissima*, only says that, in the middle of the Eleventh Century, Selvo, the thirtieth Doge, first covered the walls of the church with an incrustation of *finissimi marmi*, and had many columns conveyed thither from Athens, various islands of Greece and the Morea. A more detailed account of a single piece of Byzantine sculpture in St. Mark's is given in the *Cronica Veneta*, published in the year 1736, where we read that "at the side of the altar, in a side wall of the chapel of St. Zeno, is the marble relief of the Madonna with the Infant Christ, a bas-relief executed *alla Greca*, and underneath it a similar work in marble, representing an angel. The inscription on it declares that it was discovered by the Emperor Michael Palaiologus (1260-1283), and that the stone is alleged to be the same out of which Moses made the water to flow. The stone was discovered by the aforesaid Emperor, and brought, as the inscription on it asserts, to Constantinople, from whence the Doge Vitale Michel brought it to Venice." We see from this that after the completion of the interior the Venetians continued to collect Oriental reliefs for the adornment of the church.

To do full justice to the Byzantine sculptures on the façade of St. Mark's, we must first inquire into their history. And since the printed chronicles and descriptions of Venice afford us no information, we are compelled to have recourse to the archives of the Republic. One chronicler, indeed, who



SOUTHERN FACADE OF ST. MARK'S



## SCULPTURES ON ST. MARK'S 133

might have given us the information from documentary evidence, contents himself with the following disappointing remark:—"If I wished to give the sources of the different reliefs with which St. Mark's is adorned, I should be obliged to relate the history of all the expeditions ever undertaken by the Venetians."

Unfortunately, it is only in isolated cases that we can now hazard any definite conjectures as to the origin of these treasures. Beneath the balustrade which protects the four horses there are five bas-reliefs, placed between the seven arches of the façade. Unequal in size, they are also unequal in artistic value; and their subjects are so different as to show plainly that it is only by chance that they have been placed together. Still in some cases, they form pendants. Those, for instance, at the extreme north and south ends of the façade represent two of the Labours of Hercules. In the one we see the hero in a mantle hanging down upon his back; while on his left shoulder lies the Erymanthian wild boar, which he is firmly grasping, with both hands held up over his head. In the second, his attitude is the same, but he carries the hind of Diana. That these two mythological representations were not originally designed for the façade of a church is self-evident. Out of the Twelve Labours of Hercules, the third and fourth, following the customary computation, have here been selected, and we may assume for certain that the tablets originally belonged to a complete series of the deeds of the hero. The remaining pieces, however, are not to be found in Venice; and from this we may conclude that

the Venetians were probably not able to get possession of the entire cycle. Representations of the Labours of Hercules are not uncommon among the monuments of Greek and Roman art. But what lends a special and peculiar importance to the two tablets in question is the style in which they are executed. The firm drawing of the outlines, the very flat modelling, and the quick movement of the figure, at once betray the hand of a Byzantine artist. The drawing is so correct, and the composition of the figure so skilful, that it is impossible to assign them to a time later than the Fourth or Fifth Century after Christ—the age of Constantine and Theodosius, when the traditions of antiquity were still held in honour in the erection of public monuments. We are not afraid of being accused of exaggeration when we maintain that no city of the East, no museum in Europe, possesses Byzantine marble-reliefs so exquisite in conception and execution as these.

Two other reliefs, depicting subjects from the ancient mythology, and belonging to the Byzantine epoch of art, are to be found on the south façade of St. Mark's. First, there is a woman standing upright, enveloped in a long tunic and bearing a crown on her head. A palm-branch is visible in her left hand, while her right, which is stretched out in front of her, holds a wreath. The emblems of the wreath and palm point to a Victory, while the crown is the distinctive mark of the tutelar goddess of a city. The figures of Victory of classic antiquity are winged, and are not so composed and dignified in their bearing as this Byzantine woman, whose solemn step



## SCULPTURES ON ST. MARK'S 135

recalls the archaic Greek representations of Pallas Promachos. This figure can scarcely have served for any other purpose, whether in Constantinople or any other capital of the East, than to adorn a triumphal arch. Secondly, on the same wall of the south façade is a relief representing the sun-god in a chariot drawn by three griffins, and in all probability dating from the Ninth or Tenth Century.

Among the Byzantine sculptures in the outer walls of St. Mark's, there still remain two which represent not Christian, but mythological subjects. These mythological groups consist each of four medallions. The scenes depicted in them are partly taken from the models of classic antiquity, such as Amor riding upon a lion, and playing the flute; two eagles, one fighting with a snake, the other seated upon a hare; or a griffin attacking a deer. Others indicate an Asiatic influence, such as the curious group of four lions, placed two and two, facing one another, and with one head in common. Another of these medallions shows a boy with a drawn sword, fighting a lion; another, a gazelle, ridden by a naked man, with a sword in his hand. The meaning of these representations is very obscure, and they probably refer to popular traditions now fallen into oblivion.

The sculptures referring to Christian belief are, as might be expected, more numerous than the mythological representations on the façade of St. Mark's, and although the subjects they contain are not, in the majority of cases, of an unusual character, they nevertheless require very careful consideration, being almost the only examples preserved to us

of an art the monuments of which are rarely to be met with elsewhere. The principal doorway is ornamented by two bas-reliefs let into the wall, one on each side, and at first sight exactly alike. Each shows a knight, clad in a Byzantine coat-of-mail, and seated upon a kind of throne, with a sword across his lap, which he is in the act of drawing out of the scabbard. They are St. Demetrius, pro-consul and martyr of Saloniki, and St. George, the canonised slayer of the dragon, who suffered martyrdom in Nicomedia.

Of Byzantine reliefs containing single figures, there are to be found on the principal façade of St. Mark's only a Madonna and a figure of the archangel Michael. These too, both in execution and conception, have a character entirely their own, and diverse from Western art. Whether we go to the painting of Cimabue at Santa Croce in Florence; or to the two world-renowned pictures of the archangel by Raphael, in the Salon Carré of the Louvre; or to the equally popular painting by Guido, in the church of the Capuchins at Rome, Michael is always the same mighty hero, with foot advanced, trampling beneath him the dragon of the ancient mythology, transfixed in head or neck by the spear. In the Byzantine relief of St. Mark's, on the contrary, the archangel stands before us in solemn repose, as though awaiting the command of his Lord. Two mighty wings are visible on his shoulders; his right hand grasps a globe with a cross upon it, the symbol of the earth; his left, a sceptre, or rather herald's staff, such as we find borne by the messengers of princes as early as Homer.

## SCULPTURES ON ST. MARK'S 137

No less interesting, even though unimportant from an artistic point of view, is the figure of the Madonna, which probably dates from about the Sixth Century. She is not associated with the infant Christ, but stands alone, upright, and stretching out both her arms in prayer, in the act of offering up intercession for those who commend themselves to her protection. This conception is entirely in accordance with the fresco paintings of the early Christian catacombs.

Among the single figures of the south façade, the most prominent are the four Evangelists, of almost life size. They are apparently productions of the Byzantine art of the Fifth Century. In their conception and execution there is nothing extraordinary. The Evangelists are continually occurring in Byzantine art, especially in illuminated manuscripts. But if we compare these with the reliefs, it is at once evident that from an artistic point of view the latter are far superior to all other representations of the same subject. Nothing can be more natural than the solemn deliberation with which these holy men are here writing down their narratives. The parchment roll or book in which they write, lies, in Oriental fashion, upon their knees. John is not, as in Western representations, a youth; but an old man with a long beard; for according to the tradition of the Church, he wrote his Gospel in extreme old age, and the Apocalypse in his earlier years; and accordingly, in the representation on St. Mark's, he is writing his Gospel on a roll on his right knee, while a closed book, evidently the Apocalypse, lies upon his left.

It still remains for us to describe the reliefs in which entire compositions are depicted. We may first mention some fragments belonging to the attica of an early Christian sarcophagus, which are let into the wall above one of the doorways of the principal façade. They contain eleven different subjects from the New Testament, such as the Annunciation of the Angels to the Shepherds, the Adoration of the Wise Men, the Miracle of Cana, and Christ between the Apostles Paul and Peter. We find an abundance of similar reliefs in the museums of the Papal Palaces at Rome, brought from the atria of the oldest basilicas, and, generally speaking, not inferior in artistic value to the fragments on St. Mark's. But, notwithstanding, we must look on those of St. Mark's as unique, because they are Greek work, and of a kind of which little or nothing else has survived destruction. The care bestowed on an operation so difficult and laborious as the carving of a great number of small figures, disconnected from the background, would imply that the sarcophagus from which the fragments were taken belonged to the tomb of some great personage—a prince, perhaps even an emperor.

All that is known at the present day of Byzantine art after the Seventh Century presents it to us in an unfavourable light, and the late Byzantine sculptures in the façade of St. Mark's confirm us in this judgment. We shall therefore here refer to only two of them, which merit attention on account of the peculiarity of their subjects. They are in the south wall. In the centre of one of them is represented a throne—the heavenly throne of Christ, although Christ Him-

## SCULPTURES ON ST. MARK'S 139

self is not represented as occupying it; but on the throne are set three symbols typifying His person, viz., a cross with six arms, a medallion containing the figure of a lamb, and a crown. On each side of the throne, and looking up to it, stand six lambs, and behind them, closing in the composition, are two palm-trees and four vases. As to the meaning of these symbols, all doubt is removed by the Greek inscription beneath the relief. The lambs are the "holy apostles"; the lamb upon the throne is "the holy Lamb." Such representations are by no means uncommon among the oldest mosaics in the apses of the churches at Ravenna and Rome, which also show that the palm-trees are no idle accessory, but signify Paradise.

Another reproduction of a wall-painting or mosaic is to be found in the second relief on the same wall. Here, as usual in historical representations of primitive Christian art, two different scenes are combined in the same composition. On the left is Abraham leading the boy Isaac by the hand. Isaac carries on his back the wood for the sacrifice; Abraham holds in his left hand a great vessel, in the shape of a bowl, and doubtless representing the patriarchal tinder-box for the Fathers and theologians of the Church speculated much as to how Abraham kindled the sacrificial fire on Moriah. In the second scene, Isaac is lying bound upon the earth before a burning altar, while Abraham, standing behind him, lays his left hand upon Isaac's head, and with face averted lifts the knife in his right hand, ready to deliver the fatal blow. Behind him stands a lofty tree, with a lamb below it, and amid

the branches of the tree appears a hand, the usual symbol of the Voice of God, on which Abraham bends his gaze.

On the north side of St. Mark's, near the entrance to the courtyard of the Doge's Palace, is a relief executed in porphyry. It represents four Oriental princes embracing one another in couples. These have given rise to the most various explanations, and are pointed out as objects of peculiar interest. Guides and guidebooks alike direct attention to them, and few visitors to the City of the Lagoons can have passed them by without notice. Why they should be thought worthy of such special attention (being, as they are, of very inferior artistic value), it would be difficult to explain. Perhaps it is because they are close to a door through which people are continually passing, and are thus easily seen. They were brought from Ptolemais.

The decorations of the upper portions of the façade were completed as late as the Fourteenth Century, since the ornaments of that part are in the Gothic style and Byzantine sculptures are wholly wanting. The figurative ornamentation of the principal entrance is the work, probably not of Byzantine, but of native artists, and belongs, without the least doubt, to the beginning of the same century.

These sculptures deserve our thorough attention in more than one respect—not least because they represent the earliest efforts of Venetian sculpture. Venetian plastic art during the Fourteenth Century is almost wholly unknown outside the city; but any one who is intimately acquainted with the monuments in the churches of Venice cannot for a moment

## SCULPTURES ON ST. MARK'S 141

doubt that it was far superior to the painting of the same date, and that the great Venetian painters of the Fifteenth Century had more to learn from the sculptors than from the painters of their native state. It has been said that the first great master of Italian sculpture, Andrea Pisano, was the author of the oldest non-Byzantine sculptures on the façade of St. Mark's; but this would be to do them too much honour. In admiring them it has hitherto unhappily been the fashion to stop short at a general survey, and we ask in vain why it is that the sculptures of the principal façade have never yet been described and explained. No other reason suggests itself for this than the extraordinary variety of invention and the great wealth of composition which they display. The visitors to Venice are—not too idle or too superficial perhaps—but, let us say, too busy, to spend their time in the examination of the details of such complicated compositions. And yet these compositions are, before all things, to the last degree remarkable in their details; still more so even than in their artistic finish. Design and modelling may have been brought to an equal or greater degree of finish; but the subjects here handled by Venetian artists are simply unique of their kind.

The three semicircular archivolt of the principal doorway, one within the other, are ornamented on the inner, as well as the outer surfaces, with compositions containing figures. The large external arch is adorned with rich foliage and roses, in the taste of the best Ægypto-Arabian ornamentation, and, as usual in early Christian monuments, proceeding from two



vases. The spaces are filled up with eight holy men looking upwards to Christ, a beardless youth, at the summit of the arch. At the crown of the same arch is a medallion, with the Lamb of God, held by two angels; and below it on each side are twelve very remarkable representations of the handicrafts of Venice. First come the shipbuilders, then follow the vintners, occupied in drawing liquor from the vats. Then the bakehouse and the shambles, matched on the opposite side by a dairy, and by masons and shoemakers. These are followed by the hairdressers, and here we can see the dandies of ancient Venice having their hair pressed with curling-irons. Next comes coopers, carpenters, smiths, and many fishermen, who are placed opposite the shipbuilders. The meaning of the figures on the outer side of the smaller internal archivolt is more enigmatical. At the apex is seated a woman in antique costume, with her feet crosswise upon the ground. In each hand she holds a medallion, and beside her stand or sit sixteen women with loose-flowing hair, the majority having scrolls in their hands, which once probably bore their names. These are undoubtedly personifications of virtues. Here, for instance, is a youthful woman with flowing locks, tearing open the jaws of a lion with her hands, and representing Strength. There is Justice, holding a pair of scales in her right hand. A third is Love, with a crown upon her head. The inner side of the arch is filled by twelve representations of the months, in the style then in vogue for ornamenting illuminated manuscripts and calendars, and showing how people for the most part employed themselves in Venice during the different seasons.

## SCULPTURES ON ST. MARK'S 143

To the figures on the inmost archivolt, no religious or theological signification can be attached ; but it is perhaps precisely on this account that they are so very interesting. A cock is sitting upon a vine, pecking a bunch of grapes, while a fox looks up longingly from below ; a wolf is seen pursuing a lamb and an eagle clutches a hare. Round these scenes runs a band of foliage, issuing from a woman reclining on the ground, and offering her breast to a serpent and a man. "*Mater terra*" is the explanation of this enigmatical figure which we find in several Italian manuscripts of the Tenth, Eleventh, and Twelfth Centuries ; and we may therefore conclude that this representation—possibly borrowed from the Northern, in no case from the ancient classic mythology—had already found its way elsewhere into Italy. How proud the citizens of Venice formerly were of the adornment of the façade of their church is clearly proved by the fact that they placed a view of it in mosaic above one of the side-doors of the principal entrance. This is the sole Byzantine mosaic still remaining there, although at one time the whole of the lunettes were ornamented by them.

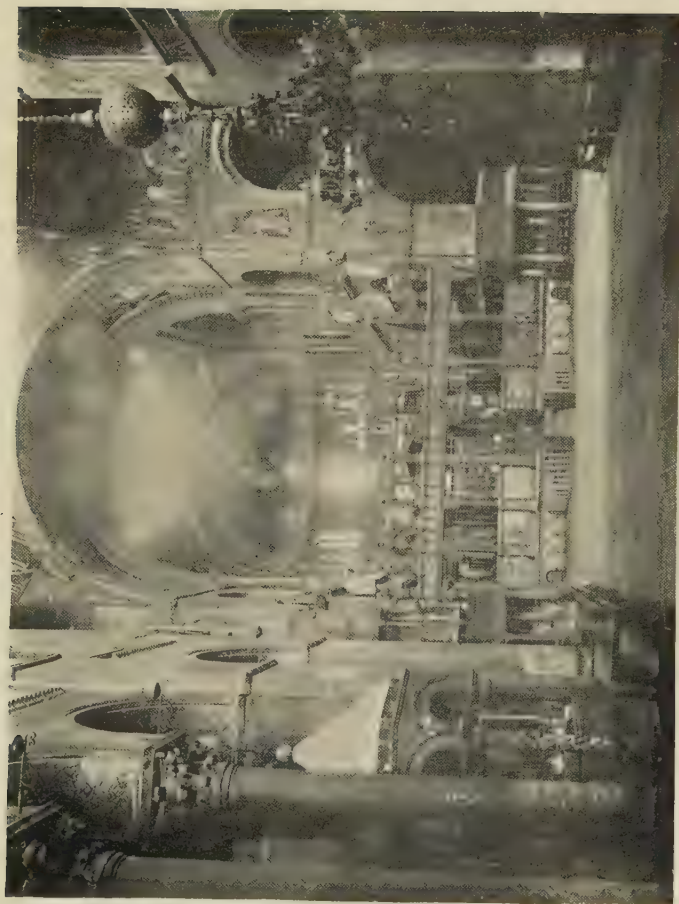
The high opinion of the Byzantine reliefs of the façade entertained even by the foremost masters of the Renaissance is proved by Gentile Bellini's great picture still preserved in Venice, which represents the procession, with the relics of the cross, in the square of St. Mark's, and in which the whole width of the background is occupied by the façade of the church, reproduced in every detail with marvellous precision.

## THE MOSAICS OF VENICE

WILLIAM B. SCOTT

PIETY and ecclesiastical observances were very favourite amusements with the Venetians, so much so, that some native historians have assigned that as the final cause of the long prosperity of the city. The great event in connection with this passion, one of the most remarkable in the history of *relics*, was the translation of the body of St. Mark from Alexandria to Venice, where it was in the course of three centuries enshrined in a church of the highest value in the history of Mediæval architecture, and especially in the art of mosaic, examples of which it has preserved of various kinds and dates, while they have disappeared by time and accidents in Rome and elsewhere. Besides, St. Mark and his lion appear in a hundred different pictures of the school, they were bound up with the very life of the city, and became identified with it more completely than any other patron-saint ever was with the locality under his charge. So self-sufficient did the piety of the Venetians become, and so confident were they in the efficiency of their patron, that the Roman ecclesiastics said, with irony, that Venice had a pope of its own, *il papa Marco*.

By the middle of the Ninth Century the sailors and merchant adventurers of the Lagoon had excelled all others on that side of Italy, and absorbed nearly all the trade of the East. At that time, Alexandria being under Mahome-



INTERIOR OF ST. MARK'S



dan rule, a little fleet of Venetian ships was lying in the harbour there, when the church wherein lay the remains of the Evangelist was pounced upon by the ruling powers, and the coloured marbles with which it was lined carefully removed for the purpose of decorating a rising palace. The Mahomedans were by no means unmindful of relics, but the priests belonging to the church were frightfully agitated lest the holy body should suffer profanation. The Venetian merchants, whose plans were laid, came to their aid, offered their ships as a temporary asylum for the precious burden, and, having once got it on board in a basket, put to sea. Theft was indeed the only way in times of peace such invaluable objects could be acquired, Mahomedans as well as Christians held them so tenaciously; but this did not seem to displease the saint, who forthwith began a career of miracle-working, warning the captain of the particular ship to whose yardarm the sacred basket had been attached, in fear of the examination for contraband goods, to furl his sails, and so forth. When safely landed at the spot now occupied by the church of San Francisco della Vigna (which still possesses one of the earliest pictures of the school, the colossal Virgin of Negroponte), an angel was said to address him with the words *Pax tibi, Marce, Evangelista meus*, words afterwards placed on the open book under the paw of the lion, and the mad joy of the people overflowed in feasting, music, processions, and prayers. The former patron, St. Theodore, was laid aside for the Evangelist, and, by the help of the Greeks, the most wonderfully rich mass of building, golden mosaic

within and crusted marble of many colours without, began to rise.

And yet it has been questioned whether any bones or body of a saint was ever brought there. Two centuries after, in 1094, the Emperor Henry III. made an express pilgrimage to the shrine, when its contents could not be found, had disappeared, temporarily withdrawn themselves, as it was said. This untoward affair cast the city into mourning, until one morning the Sacristan perceived, on entering the church, a fragrant odour, and a brilliant light issuing from a particular column. At first he feared a fire was breaking out, but on approaching he saw a human arm protruding from the stone. Very soon Doge and bishop, with priests in hundreds, were kneeling before the rent and illuminated column, when the protruding hand dropped a ring from one of its fingers into the bishop's bosom. The solid mass opened, and an iron coffin was visible, in which were the remains of St. Mark. This was on the 24th of July, ever after kept as a feast; but, strange to say, since that time the burial-place of the body has remained unknown. The secret was said to be confided to a few, but, indeed, the next Doge (or rather Carossio, the usurper of the Doge's throne) has been accused of stealing the relics. The ring, itself a sufficient curiosity, was stolen, and disappeared in 1585.

In connection with this church, the art of mosaic, which had been practised long before by Greeks at Ravenna, entered Venice. With the mosaists came other artists, and on the island of Murano, besides the glass-workers, various Byzan-



tine craftsmen began working. It is to this island and to these painters, of whom, however, individually we know nothing, we must look for the beginning of all the arts in Venice.

The two outlying islands, too far away from the seventy or eighty on which the city stands to be considered a part of it, Torcello and Murano, are long strips of still thickly inhabited houses, with symptoms of antiquity as great as any part of the capital. To the last named island the manufacture of glass was confined by the government, and held in the profoundest secrecy; but there can be no doubt this secrecy was initiated by the workmen themselves, who were foreigners, and that the workshops of Constantinople continued to a rather late time to export objects of art of all sorts, glass and pictures in particular, not only to Venice, but to all the coast towns of Italy. During the Sixth, Seventh, and Eighth Centuries the whole interior of Italy was overrun by northern conquerors, and production had entirely ceased. This being the case, the cities along the coast, Venice, Ravenna, Ancona, and round by Naples to Genoa, the rival at a later time of Venice, were better off than interior towns. Late Roman art during this period dies out.

Venice itself, dating from this period, had no traditions whatever. No antique spirit inspired sculpture as at Pisa and Rome, nor even at a later time did it practically adopt the Renaissance, especially in architecture, like the rest of Italy. There seems to have been, in the early Venetian temper, a dislike to adopt benefits of an intellectual sort from

the *terra firma* which the island power had subjugated, from Padua and Verona particularly; and the advantage of trade with the capital of the Eastern Empire continued the Byzantine influence in other matters. At the same time we must recognise in the architecture of the advancing city a quite independent character: sculpture there was none under Greek religious influence. It must be remembered also that Eastern Art not only continued its traditional forms and conditions, it retrograded; and its pictures gradually became more hieratic, parting from living nature altogether at the very time free artistic impulses were beginning in the West.

We must not, therefore, expect to find any authentic pictures dating very early in Venice. There were painters on the Continent a century earlier. Giotto's noble work in the Arena was accomplished at the very commencement of the Fourteenth Century, 1306, and yet near as it was, and in the territory of the Republic, it appears to have had no influence on the painters of Murano; the most prosperous state in Italy, Venice, at that day continued without painters, and imported its art with its manufactures.

The existing specimens of native mosaics, according to Kugler, are the mosaics in the church of St. Cyprian, in the town of Murano, completed in 882, representing the Virgin between saints and archangels. With incomparably more force, however, he says, the Byzantine type is represented in the Church of St. Mark, that curious fabric being begun in 976, at the latest, the earliest wall and cupola pictures therein go back to the Eleventh, and perhaps to the Tenth, Century.

The floor, the walls, and the pillars, half-way up, were covered with the most costly marbles, while the rest of the interior—upper walls, waggon-roofs, and cupolas, comprising a surface of more than forty thousand square feet—was covered with mosaics on a gold ground; a gigantic work which even all the wealth of Venice spent six centuries in patching together. Thus it is that we find all the successive stages of development in these mosaics, down to “the lowest mannerism of the school of Tintoretto,” perpetuated in the edifice. Many of the earlier are so noble in design, and so curious in an archæological and mythological point of view, that it is surprising they have not been more studied and reproduced. The single figures are for the most part conventional and similar to others of the same personages elsewhere; but the long series of subjects from the Bible, beginning with the first verse of Genesis, are full of thought and mystical beauty. In all those showing the progressive stages of creation, God is represented in light yellow and bright garments, partly white, not as in later Art in deep red and blue approaching to black. He stands calmly, as he does not fly with rolling draperies and great feet extended, as in Michelangelo, or in Raphael’s imitation of the same, and is attended by, or rather his acts are witnessed by, angels in light blue, one, two, or three; a single angel in the creation of Light (which is represented by bars of gold rushing out of two globes, one red, the other black), having one wing yellow, the other blue; three angels in the creation of the vegetable world. In others that follow, as in that wherein

their Maker is telling our first parents to be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth, we see the most unhesitating candour of representation, showing the long journey and the many changes our ideas of the Deity have passed through since these mosaics were considered their fitting expression.

The effect on the eye made by the interior of St. Mark's, which is only lit from above, is certainly gloomy and oppressive, but gorgeous and overpowering. We must remember that there was no need for light except at the altar, which was blazing with lamps, when the people assembled, and that glass windows were at their rarest at the time the church was planned; but it strikes upon the heart of the visitor as the piled-up offerings of men who were willing to buy the favour of Heaven with the richest gifts. From the tessellated pavement, undulating like the waves of the sea (whether or not intentionally is a question lately raised, and still unsettled, although it is said the groining of the crypt is perfect), up to the gilt ironwork on the tops of the cupolas, it is complete. Outside the mosaics are for the most part late. The only old one of the five, over the five portals, shows the difference between the decorative sense of the end of the Fourteenth Century and the beginning of the Eighteenth, when the others were mostly done. The spaces covered are concave hemispheres, and in the earlier mosaic the forms are made to bend with the curvature towards the centre, like reflections in a glass ball; the later resists the curvature of its own surface, contradicting the architectural basis, and looking like a picture applied.

## THE PIAZZA

HENRY PERL

WE find ourselves on the Piazza itself, which we are to study under the different aspects of different hours of the day—on the Piazza, with the encircling arcades, locally called the Procuratie,<sup>1</sup> in which shelter from the sun or the rain can always be obtained. The Piazza was cut across by a canal until the beginning of the Twelfth Century, from the banks of which rose the first Church of San Geminiano, and on the site of the Loggie of the Ducal Palazzo flourished a vegetable garden belonging to the nuns of San Zaccaria. At that remote period, the Senate, which then only meant the elders, when Puritanical simplicity reigned amongst the island community, liked to retire there to meditate quietly on the State necessities of the rapidly growing state. In the Twelfth Century the canal was filled in and the church mentioned above pulled down, only for another to rise up, to which the same name was given, but which was destroyed by order of Napoleon in 1810. In 1260 the first block was laid of the Piazza di San Marco, after the designs of Andrea Tirali, and from the same time may be said to date its rise to the glorious position it was to occupy as the nucleus of the life of Venice.

<sup>1</sup> The nine Procurators, second in power to the Doge alone, lived in the palaces of the Piazza: hence this name.

The central portion of the Piazza is 192 yards long by 90 broad on the eastern or San Marco, and 61 on the western or Palazzo Reale end.

What the Piazza di San Marco is to the Venetians can only be understood by those who are intimately acquainted with the inner life of the town. According to the time at which it is visited, it is the forum for the transaction of civil and political business, the market for buying and selling all manner of goods, the exchange, the place for the drawing of lotteries, the gondola station, the scene of church or secular *fêtes*, the promenade of all classes, the summer *rendez-vous* of the upper ten, the open-air tribunal, at the time of the carnival the ballroom the spot where artists of all kinds meet to discuss their affairs, the stage for religious ceremonies, the place to secure seats at the theatre, or to have your boots blacked—" *La pattina, la pattina lucido!*" rings the cry, reminding us that well-polished shoes often make up for worn-out costumes—the place where the latest news is to be had by every one from all parts of the world; in a word, the meeting-point of all Venice—especially of those who have any interest in common—from porters and factory-girls to the *élite* of society.

Every article of dress can be bought alike by ladies and gentlemen in the Piazza, and things are very *chic* there, too. Jewels and art fabrics, antique and modern, of every variety, are there displayed to suit every taste and purse; and at any hour of the day or night, without leaving the square, you can get a hot or a cold meal, anything you fancy to drink and

sweetmeats to toy with; or you can have your hair cut or dressed; and last, not least, you can thoroughly steep yourself in an atmosphere of art, for from whatever point of view you look at this nucleus of all that is best in the whole world, your eyes will rest upon some scene of satisfying beauty.

This noble marble-paved square, where dust and the noise of carriages, with the barking of dogs, are alike unknown, where the rain sinks away as soon as it has fallen, leaving the stones as clean and fresh as ever, is not alone the focus of the grandeur of Venezia, it is her very heart; it is herself, for in it is contained all that her citizens can need.

Differences of rank cease to exist face to face with this stone Ninon de L'Enclos, as a witty Frenchman dubbed the Piazza, and the unique square loses not one iota of its grandeur thereby, as we can well understand when we remember that the banner of the Republic was set up in Venice in the Fourteenth Century.

We saunter slowly up and down the Piazza, now sitting down outside some *café*, first one side and then another, meeting at every turn fresh details of the highest artistic value.

But let us pause a moment to look up at the Clock Tower, with its big dial-plate visible from a long distance off. This tower is one of the curiosities of Venice, and was erected by Pietro Lombardo, one of the Lombardi family, with whose name so much of the best architecture in Venice is associated. La Torre dell' Orologio dates from 1496, and is remarkable for two black giants on a platform, which strike the



hours with their hammers, and are called by the Venetians "*i Mari*." From the Feast of the Epiphany to the beginning of Lent, and during the week between Ascension Day and Whit Sunday, the figures of the three kings who came to worship the Infant Christ may be seen to issue every hour from one of the two doors leading to the gallery of the tower where the Madonna sits enthroned, and passing in front of her they remove their crowns, bow low before her, and walk off to the second door on the other side, through which they disappear. This pretty little puppet-show caused an immense amount of excitement at the time of its erection, and even now, especially at Whitsuntide, crowds of country-folk collect to stare up at it.

The general effect—we mean of the tower itself—is highly decorative, and is quite inseparable from our thoughts of Venice, for it rises up in our memories in connection with so many characteristic scenes. Truly a typical bit of local colouring is this trusty old Torre dell' Orologio, which greets us directly we set foot in Venice from the water-side and come in sight of the Piazzetta.

The device of the noble Venetian lion with outstretched paws upon the cover of the Gospels, with the background of star-flecked azure blue sky, gave rise to a clever *bon mot*. In 1797, when novelty was the rage, the motto of the lion of San Marco, "*Pax tibi Marce Evangelista meus*," was converted into the formula "*Droits de l'homme et du citoyen*"; and a gondolier—the gondoliers of Venice are noted for their wit and ready repartee—cried, "*Il leone gha volta pagina*" (the

lion has turned over a new leaf). It was not long, however, before the lion of the Clock Tower, with all his winged comrades returned to the old "*Pax tibi Marce Evangelista meus.*"

We meant only just to look at the time, but the stones of Venice have all such a lot to say for themselves that it is very difficult to tear ourselves away from them. It is eleven o'clock now, and at twelve o'clock we expect an acquaintance to have *di collazione* with us.

But we will just turn into the Procuratie Vecchie first, to which a path leads direct from the Clock Tower. It is always pleasant to stroll about in these arcades, for they are well protected from the heat and dust. We pass jeweller's shop after jeweller's shop beneath this porticus with its fifty arches and the electric light almost deceives us into fancying we are looking at the gems by starlight. It is the same with the unrivalled *verroterie*, or glass-ware, which, with the crimson plush setting, presents quite a fairy-like appearance. The only thing, however, which we really cannot pass without stopping to examine it, is a very lovely Venetian necklace of thirty strings or *fili* as they are technically called, such as Venice is famed for all the world over. This wonderful collar is made of niello, or enamel beads, of about the size of a thaler, and the clasp consists of a many-coloured representation of the old arms of Venice or of the winged lion. The necklace is worn so that the clasp comes in front on the centre of the throat. A celebrated ornament of this kind, coveted by all foreign ladies, is that made by Angelo Mis-

siaglia, and as it consists of ducats of the finest gold, not one of which had ever been used, it must have cost a very large sum.

It is really marvellous how many jewellers work and thrive in Venice. All Italians—especially the Venetians, who have more affinity with Orientals than their sisters of the rest of the peninsula—delight as much in decking themselves out with jewels as the women of the Orient, and in spite of their love of economy in other respects, squander large sums upon their ornaments.

Seated in front of the *cafés*, *Trattorie*, German *Birrerie*, and drinking-saloons called “American bars” and resembling those on the other side of the Atlantic, may be seen at this hour of the day many a daintily-dressed and befrizzled fop, with the inevitable flower, bought from the equally inevitable flower-girl, in his button-hole, gazing into the blue, or, to be strictly accurate, up at the greyish-blue curtains which hang down from the roofing of the arcades, and flutter in the soft sea-breeze which always comes in to freshen the atmosphere about noon.

As we stroll along in the cool stone grove, we pass yet more shops full of costly products of Venetian industry: glass mosaics, filigree-work, point lace, and antique silken textures, quaint life-sized figures carved in wood, furniture ornamented with iron filigree-work or carved and inlaid, all of truly artistic design and workmanship; all manner of reproductions of masterpieces of pictorial art; antique and modern Venetian mirrors, memorial mosaics and other examples of mon-

umental art, all Venetian specialties, peculiarly fascinating to the foreigner. The thought is first borne in upon us that in the inner labyrinths of this town, where at first sight life seems to be one long dream of pleasure, there must be many important industries and many skilled artisans.

And now for a rapid glance at the Procuratie Nuove, that colonnade which is always cool even on the hottest June day. Here things appear very much the same in the early part of the day as they do over in the Procuratie Vecchie. Tripping about amongst the aristocrats, officials, and the privileged idlers so cleverly dubbed *Disperati*, are the flower-girls in their fresh youth and the middle-aged seller of wild flowers from the country, who reminds us, with his two baskets full of floral treasures, of some kitchen garden in late autumn. A group of painters always appear at Florian's about this time to take their *collazione* or *dejeuner à la fourchette* together.

In this classical colonnade, with its thirty-six arches, there reigns a kind of hush, for here business never makes itself obtrusive, for though there are a good many old curiosity shops and other art warehouses, their owners have no need to advertise their wares—those who want them know well where to find them. The fact that we can go up from here to the regal apartments on the first floor, which every foreigner ought to visit, is yet another attraction of these Procuratie; and there, too, we can enjoy absolute quiet. And the “*volte*” once gone through, as they say in the breaking in of horses, we shall come in due course to the

permanent art exhibitions, housed in rooms on the same floor in the last wing of the colonnade, which every one ought to see, for they form a kind of monthly record of the art industries of Venice.

Nearer the Piazzetta all is changed, and trade takes the place of art. Agents of ship-brokers, consignors of merchandise, offices of steamship companies, storehouses, etc., occupy this wing, and the frequenters of the neighbouring *cafés* are all busy people. The bank buildings, once the old Zecca or mint, the newly-built well-situated Café alla Borsa, looking out towards the Molo, occupying three arcades of the Zecca, form the finest point of view of the Procuratie Nuove, of which Sansovino drew the plans, carried out in 1582, unfortunately with certain alterations, by Vincenzo Scamozzi.

Time flies fast when you are talking about the past. Why, it is twelve o'clock already; we hear the twelve long-drawn-out strokes from the Clock Tower of San Marco, and at the same moment rings out a cannon-shot from San Giorgio, the signal for all Venice that lunch-time has arrived. In a moment the scene is changed. The Piazza is at once full of people eager for their mid-day meal; and at the same time appear hundreds of winged beggars whom nobody dreams of driving away, for their privileges have been secured to them for many long years. The pigeons of San Marco, which nest in great numbers amongst the arches and decorations of the various buildings, come down in flocks, circling about the church and Piazza as if, pensioners of the Republic as they are, they knew full well that they have a right to the food

so amply provided for them by their many patrons and friends. A very beautiful picture is this daily gathering on the Piazza of the pigeons at noon and at two o'clock, a poetic picture which never loses its charm. Foreigners, especially, are very fond of feeding them, and ladies and children are lavish with corn which their favourites eat out of their hands. So tame and confiding have the gentle creatures become, through a long course of indulgence and petting, that they often settle on the hands, arms or shoulders of their friends.

The cannon-shot was not only the signal for the birds to fly down from their sheltered niches behind the cornice, but also for all the clerks in the various offices to lay down their pens as if at the word of command from their chiefs, and hurry through the Procuratie to take their second breakfast, and enjoy their one short hour of rest during the day in one or another restaurant hard by. As a result, the Piazza is for some ten minutes full of life and animation, and even the late risers, who do not think it good form to appear before the mid-day cannon signal has been heard, may be seen gathering together now.

All about the flagstaffs with their winged lions are charming groups pausing to exchange greetings or to make up little luncheon parties. Though from these flagstaffs no longer float the silken banners of the Morea, Cyprus and Candia, symbolising the vast possessions of the Republic, the far-stretching influence of Venice is still illustrated by the many different nationalities represented here. It is at such a time as this that the Piazza appears at its best—at least, at its

best during the hours of broad daylight, for of course at mid-day there is none of the glamour or mystery which have so much to do with the fascination exercised on all comers by the unrivalled Venezia. As in all works of art, every picture in Venice gains by something being left to the imagination of the spectator. It was this secret which Turner—most successful of all the exponents of Venetian efforts of colour and chiaroscuro—so completely fathomed in his many exquisite water-colour views of the fair city of his admiration; and we may perhaps add that it was this same secret which Canaletto, in his more prosaic renderings of the same scenes, to a certain extent missed.

But we are again wandering off into side issues and must return to the Piazza itself. From November to April, the fashionable world congregates to bask in the sunshine on the Piazza from two to four, or according to the new Italian form from the hour of fourteen to that of sixteen, and four times a week to listen to the civic or military band.

On a bright clear autumn, or even winter day, the beautiful buildings on the Piazza, especially the façade of San Marco with its marvellous wealth of architectural ornaments, are seen to the very greatest advantage. The atmosphere is so transparent, that every detail, however minute, can be distinctly recognised, and there is about the whole a repose which in other lights is rather wanting to this very complex structure. It is, in fact, a marked peculiarity of the whole of Venice, especially of the fine architectural groups on the Piazza di San Marco, that they appear totally different under



different conditions, whether of atmosphere or of light, and affect the spectator in a number of different ways.

We tear ourselves away from our contemplation of the inanimate stone beauties on every side, to give due attention to the many lovely and fascinating women in costly costumes who take eye and heart by storm. With faces half hidden by big white or rose-coloured silk sunshades, giving to them a touch of mystery, they are seated in the same Piazza where Shakespeare's Othello first saw his Desdemona, and where Bianca Cappello—this we know for very certain—gave Bonaventurini the sign which preceded her flight from her father's house. Each one of these Venetian women is in herself a poem.

Women little know how wonderfully the beautiful Piazza di San Marco sets off their charms especially in the mild sunshine of a winter or early spring day, when the old church literally radiates golden beams reflected from the fair young faces gazing up at its time honoured glories, and borrowing from it something of its triumphant elation of expression. And when the sun sinks lower, and the shadows lengthen, the capricious beauties in stone and gold become transformed in appearance, their features gradually grow paler—one is almost tempted to say more diaphanous—these marvellous creations in stone which affect us much as do the *Thousand and One Nights* in fiction, as the sunshine imprints on them the hurried farewell kiss of the short winter twilight, and day is suddenly converted into night,—soft, soothing gentle night, reminding us of the smile of some young mother, or of the

rapt ecstasy of some devotee before the figure of the Redeemer in a quiet village church. How different does the whole scene appear on a hot summer's day, when it resembles more the dream of some Oriental potentate, with the medley of turrets and chapels, the golden cupolas, the crosses, the weather-cocks, the angels and saints, in which blue and gold predominate, standing out darkly, yet distinctly and imposingly, from beneath their pale gold garlands of stone, whilst the greenish grey of the main material looks leaden by contrast. Or again at night what a change is there, when everything around is steeped in darkness, and there is no light in heaven but the pale light of stars; when all styles are blended into one harmonious whole, and the whole mighty mass of buildings glows as with the white heat of a conflagration before everything falls to pieces in ashes; when the great lunettes gleam like huge diamonds, and the general effect is of some mysterious unfathomable chaos, the very spires and towers resembling hieroglyphic writing traced upon the night sky by the invisible hand of some cyclops.

## THE DOVES OF ST. MARK'S

HORATIO F. BROWN

**I**N Venice the pigeons do not allow you to forget them, even if one desired to forget a bird that is so intimately connected with the city and with a great ceremony of that ancient Republic which has passed away. They belong so entirely to the place, and especially to the great square; they have made their home for so many generations among the carvings of the Basilica, at the feet of the Bronze Horses, and under the massive cornices of the New Procuratie, that the great campanile itself is hardly more essential to the character of the Piazza than are these delicate denizens of St. Mark's. In the structure of the Ducal Palace the wants of the pigeons have been taken into account, and near the two great wells which stand in the inner courtyard, little cups of Istrian stone have been let into the pavement for the pigeons to drink from. On cold frosty mornings you may see them tapping disconsolately at the ice which covers their drinking troughs, and may win their thanks by breaking it for them. Or if the *borin* blows hard from the east, the pigeons sit in long rows under the eaves of the Procuratie; their necks drawn into their shoulders, and the neck feathers ruffled round their heads, till they have lost all shape, and look like a row of slate-coloured cannon balls.

From St. Mark's the pigeons have sent out colonies to the

other churches and *campi* of Venice, they have crossed the Grand Canal, and roost and croon among the volutes of the Salute, or, in wild weather, wheel high and airily above its domes. They have even found their way to Malamocco and Mazzorbo; so that all Venice in the sea owns and protects its sacred bird. But it is in St. Mark's that the pigeons "most do congregate"; and one cannot enter the piazza and stand for a moment at the corner without hearing the sudden rush of wings upon the air, and seeing the white under feathers of their pinions, as the doves strike backward to check their flight, and flutter down at one's feet in expectation of peas or grain. They are boundlessly greedy, and will stuff themselves till they can hardly walk, and the little red feet stagger under the loaded crop. They are not virtuous, but they are very beautiful.

There is a certain fitness in the fact that the dove should be the sacred bird of the sea city. Both English "dove" and Latin *columba* mean the diver; and the dove uses the air much as the fish uses the sea. It glides, it dives, it shoots through its airy ocean; it hovers against the breeze, or presses its breast against the sirocco storm, as you may see fish poised in their course against the stream; then with a sudden turn it relaxes the strain and sweeps away down the wind. The dove is an airy emblem of the sea upon which Venice and the Venetians live. But more than that; the most permanent quality in the colour of the lagoons, where the lights are always shifting, is the dove-tone of sea and sky; a tone which holds all colours in solution, and out of which they emerge



THE DOVES OF ST. MARKS'



as the water ripples or the cloud flakes pass; just as the colours are shot and varied on a young dove's neck.

There is some doubt as to the origin of these flocks of pigeons which shelter in St. Mark's. According to one story, Henry Dandolo, the crusader, was besieging Candia; he received valuable information from the interior of the island by means of carrier-pigeons, and, later on, sent news of his successes home to Venice by the same messengers. In recognition of these services the government resolved to maintain the carriers at the public cost; and the flocks of to-day are the descendants of the Fourteenth Century pigeons. The more probable tradition, however, is that which connects these pigeons with the antique ceremonies of Palm Sunday. On that festival the Doge made the tour of the Piazza, accompanied by all the officers of state, the Patriarch, the foreign ambassadors, the silver trumpets,—all the pomp of the ducal dignity. Among other largess of that day, a number of pigeons, weighted by pieces of paper tied to their legs, used to be let loose from the gallery where the Bronze Horses stand, above the western door of the church. Most of the birds were easily caught by the crowd, and kept for their Easter dinner; but some escaped, and took refuge in the upper parts of the palace and among the domes of Saint Mark's. The superstition of the people was easily touched, and the birds that sought the protection of the saint were thenceforth dedicated to the patron of Venice. The charge of supporting them was committed to the superintendents of the corn stores, and the usual hour for feeding the pigeons was nine



o'clock in the morning. During the revolution of 1797 the birds fared as badly as the aristocracy; but when matters settled down again the feeding of the pigeons was resumed by the municipality, and takes place at two in the afternoon, though the incessant largess of strangers can leave the birds but little appetite for their regular meal.

In spite of the multitudes of pigeons that haunt the squares of the city, a dead pigeon is as rare to see as a dead donkey on the mainland. It is a pious opinion that no Venetian ever kills a pigeon, and apparently they never die; but the fact that they do not increase so rapidly as to become a nuisance instead of a pleasure, lends some colour to the suspicion that pigeon pies are not unknown at certain tables during the proper season.

## THE COLUMNS OF THE PIAZZETTA

JOHN RUSKIN

GO first into the Piazzetta, and stand anywhere in the shade, where you can well see its granite pillars.

Your Murray tells you that they are "famous," and that the one is "surmounted by the bronze lion of St. Mark, the other by the statue of St. Theodore, the Protector of the Republic."

It does not, however, tell you why, or for what the pillars are "famous." Nor, in reply to a question which might conceivably occur to the curious, why St. Theodore should protect the Republic by standing on a crocodile; nor whether the "bronze lion of St. Mark" was cast by Sir Edwin Landseer,—or some more ancient and ignorant person;—nor what these rugged corners of limestone rock, at the bases of the granite, were perhaps once in the shape of. Have you any idea why, for the sake of any such things, these pillars were once, or should yet be, more renowned than the Monument, or the column of the Place Vendôme, both of which are much bigger?

Well, they are famous, first, in memorial of something which is better worth remembering than the fire of London, or the achievements of the great Napoleon. And they are famous, or used to be, among artists, because they are beau-

tiful columns; nay, as far as we old artists know, the most beautiful columns at present extant and erect in the conveniently visitable world.

Each of these causes of their fame I will try in some dim degree to set before you.

I said they were set there in memory of *things*,—not of the man who did the things. They are to Venice, in fact, what the Nelson column would be to London if, instead of a statue of Nelson and a coil of rope, on the top of it, we had put one of the four Evangelists, and a saint, for the praise of the Gospel and of Holiness;—trusting to the memory of Nelson to our own souls.

However, the memory of the Nelson of Venice, being now seven hundred years old, has more or less faded from the heart of Venice herself, and seldom finds its way into the heart of a stranger. Somewhat concerning him, though a stranger, you may care to hear, but you must hear it in quiet; so let your boatman take you across to San Giorgio Maggiore; there you can moor your gondola under the steps in the shade, and read in peace, looking up at the pillars when you like.

In the year 1117, when the Doge Ordelafo Falier had been killed under the walls of Zara, Venice chose, for his successor, Domenico Michiel, Michael of the Lord, "*Cattolico nomo e audace*," a Catholic and brave man, the servant of God and of St. Michael.

Venice was sincerely pious, and intensely covetous. But not covetous merely of money. She was covetous first of



THE COLUMNS OF THE PIAZZETTA



fame; secondly, of kingdom; thirdly, of pillars of marble and granite, such as these that you see; lastly, and quite principally, of the relics of good people.

To the nation in this religiously covetous hunger, Baldwin appealed, a captive to the Saracen. The Pope sent letters to press his suit, and the Doge Michael called the State to Council in the Church of St. Mark. There he, and the Primate of Venice, and her nobles, and such of the people as had due entrance with them, by way of beginning the business, celebrated the Mass of the Holy Spirit. Then the Primate read the Pope's letters aloud to the assembly; then the Doge made the assembly a speech. And there was no opposition party in that parliament to make opposition speeches; and there were no reports of the speech next morning in any *Times* or *Daily Telegraph*. And there were no plenipotentiaries sent to the East, and back again. But the vote passed for war.

The Doge left his son in charge of the State, and sailed for the Holy Land, with forty galleys and twenty-eight beaked ships of battle—"ships which were painted with divers colours," far seen in pleasant splendour. Some faded likeness of them, twenty years ago, might be seen in the painted sails of the fishing-boats which lay crowded, in lowly lustre, where the development of civilisation now only brings black steam-tugs, to bear the people of Venice to the bathing-machines of Lido, covering their Ducal Palace with soot, and consuming its sculptures with sulphurous acid.

The beaked ships of the Doge Michael had each a hun-

dred oars;—each oar pulled by two men, not accommodated with sliding seats, but breathed well for their great boat-race between the shores of Greece and Italy;—whose names, alas, with the names of their trainers, are noteless in the journals of the barbarous time.

They beat their way across the waves, nevertheless,<sup>1</sup> to the place where Dorcas worked for the poor, and St. Peter lodged with his namesake tanner. There, showing first but a squadron of a few ships, they drew the Saracen fleet out to sea, and so set upon them.

And the Doge, in his true Duke's place, first in his beaked ship, led for the Saracen admiral's, struck her and sunk her. And his host of falcons followed to the slaughter; and to the prey also,—for the battle was not without gratification of the commercial appetite. The Venetians took a number of ships containing precious silks and “a quantity of drugs and pepper.”

After which battle, the Doge went up to Jerusalem, there to take further counsel concerning the use of his Venetian power; and, being received there with honour, kept his Christmas in the mountain of the Lord.

In the council of war that followed, debate became stern whether to undertake the siege of Tyre or Ascalon. The judgments of men being at pause, the matter was given to the judgment of God. They put the names of the two cities in an urn, on the altar of the Church of the Sepulchre. An

<sup>1</sup> Oars, of course, for calm and adverse winds, only; bright sails full to the helpful breeze.



## COLUMNS OF THE PIAZZETTA 171

orphan child was taken to draw the lots, who, putting his hand into the urn, drew out the name of *Tyre*.

Which name you may have heard before, and read perhaps words concerning her fall—careless always *when* the fall took place, or whose sword smote her.

She was still a glorious city, still queen of the treasures of the sea; chiefly renowned for her work in glass and in purple; set in command of a rich plain, “irrigated with plentiful and perfect waters, famous for its sugar-canes; ‘*fortissima*,’ she herself, upon her rock, double walled towards the sea, treble walled to the land; and, to all seeming, unconquerable but by famine.”

You will not expect me here, at St. George’s steps, to give an account of the various mischief done on each other with the dart, the stone, and the fire, by the Christian and Saracen, day by day. The steady siege went on, till the Tyrians lost hope, and asked terms of surrender. They obtained security of person and property, to the indignation of the Christian soldiery, who had expected the sack of Tyre. The city was divided into three parts, of which two were given to the King of Jerusalem, the third to the Venetians.

While the Doge Michael fought for the Christian King at Jerusalem, the Christian Emperor at Byzantium attacked the defenceless states of Venice, on the mainland of Dalmatia, and seized their cities. Whereupon the Doge set sail homewards, fell on the Greek islands of the Ægean, and took the spoil of them; seized Cephalonia; recovered the lost cities of Dalmatia; compelled the Greek Emperor to sue for

peace,—gave it, in angry scorn; and set his sails at last for his own Rialto, with the sceptres of Tyre and Byzantium to lay at the feet of Venice. Spoil he also brought, enough, of such commercial kind as Venice valued. These pillars that you look upon, of rosy and grey rock; and the dead bodies of St. Donato and St. Isidore. He thus returned in 1126.

Of these things, then, the two pillars before you are “famous” in memorial. What in themselves they possess deserving honour, we will next try to discern. But you must row a little nearer to the pillars, so as to see them clearly.

I said these pillars were the most beautiful known to me:—but you must understand this saying to be of the whole pillar-group of base, shaft, and capital,—not only of their shafts.

You know so much of architecture, perhaps, as that an “order” of it is the system connecting a shaft with its capital and cornice. And you can surely feel so much of architecture, as that if you took the heads off these pillars, and set the granite shaft simply upright on the pavement, they would perhaps remind you of ninepins or rolling-pins, but would in no wise contribute either to respectful memory of the Doge Michael, or to the beauty of the Piazzetta.

Their beauty which has been so long instinctively felt by artists, consists then first in the proportion, and then in the propriety of their several parts. Do not confuse proportion with propriety. An elephant is as properly made as a stag; but it is not so gracefully proportioned. In fine architecture, and all other fine arts, grace and propriety meet.

## COLUMNS OF THE PIAZZETTA 173

I will take the fitness first. You see that both these pillars have wide bases of successive steps.<sup>1</sup> You can feel that these would be "improper" round the pillars of an arcade in which people walked, because they would be in the way. But they are proper here, because they tell us the pillar is to be isolated, and that it is a monument of importance. Look from these shafts to the arcade of the Ducal Palace. Its pillars have been found fault with for wanting bases. But they were meant to be walked beside without stumbling.

Next you see the tops of the capitals of the great pillars spread wide, into flat tables. You can feel, surely, that these are entirely "proper," to afford room for the statues they are to receive, and that the edges, which bear no weight, may "properly" extend widely. But suppose a weight of superincumbent wall were to be laid on these pillars? The extent of capital which is now graceful, would then be weak and ridiculous.

Thus far of propriety, whose simple laws are soon satisfied: next, of proportion.

You see that one of the shafts,—the St. Theodore's,—is much slenderer than the other.

One general law of proportion is that a slender shaft should have a slender capital, and a ponderous shaft, a ponderous one.

But had this law been here followed, the companion pil-

<sup>1</sup> Restored,—but they always must have had them, in some such proportion.

lars would have instantly become ill-matched. The eye would have discerned in a moment the fat pillar and the lean. They would never have become the fraternal pillars—"the two" of the Piazzetta.

With subtle, scarcely at first traceable, care, the designer varied the curves and weight of his capitals; and gave the massive head to the slender shaft, and the slender capital to the massive shaft. And thus they stand in symmetry, and uncontenting equity.

Next, for the form of these capitals themselves, and the date of them.

You will find in the guide-books that though the shafts were brought home by the Doge in 1126, no one could be found able to set them up until the year 1171, when a certain Lombard, called Nicholas of the Barterers, raised them, and for reward of such engineering skill, bargained that he might keep tables for forbidden games of chance between the shafts. Whereupon the Senate ordered that executions should also take place between them.

But now of the capitals themselves. If you are the least interested in architecture, should it not be of some importance to you to note the style of them? Twelfth Century capitals, as fresh as when they came from the chisel, are not to be seen every day, or everywhere;—much less capitals like these a fathom or so broad and high! And if you know the architecture of England and France in the Twelfth Century, you will find these capitals still more interesting from their extreme difference in manner. Not the least like our

clumps and humps and cushions, are they? For these are living Greek work, still; not savage Norman or clumsy Northumbrian, these; but of pure Corinthian race; yet, with Venetian practicalness of mind, solidified from the rich clusters of light leafage which were their ancient form. You must find time for a little practical cutting of capitals yourself, before you will discern the beauty of these. There is nothing like a little work with the fingers for teaching the eyes.

What I want you to notice now, is but the form of the block of Istrian stone, usually with a spiral, more or less elaborate, on each of its projecting angles. For there is infinitude of history in that solid angle, prevailing over the light Greek leaf.

That *is* related to our humps and clumps at Durham and Winchester. Here is, indeed, Norman temper, prevailing over Byzantine; and it means,—the outcome of that quarrel of Michael with the Greek Emperor. It means—western for eastern life, in the mind of Venice. It means her fellowship with the western chivalry; her triumph in the Crusades,—triumph over her own foster nurse, Byzantium.

Which significances of it, and many others with *them*, if we would follow, we must leave our stone-cutting for a little while and map out the chart of Venetian history from its beginning into such masses as we may remember without confusion.

But since this will take time, and we cannot quite tell how long it may be before we get back to the Twelfth Cen-

tury again, and to our Piazzetta shafts, let me complete what I can tell you of these at once.

In the first place, the Lion of St. Mark is a splendid piece of Eleventh or Twelfth Century bronze. I know that by the style of him; but have never found out where he came from.<sup>1</sup> I may now chance on it, however, at any moment on other quests. Eleventh or Twelfth Century the lion—Fifteenth, or later, his wings; very delicate in feather-workmanship, but with little lift or strike in them; decorative mainly. Without doubt his first wings were thin sheets of beaten bronze, shred in plumage; far wider in their sweep than these.<sup>2</sup>

The statue of St. Theodore, whatever its age, is wholly without merit. I can't make it out myself, nor find record of it: in a stonemason's yard, I should have passed it as modern. But this merit of the statue is here of little consequence.

St. Theodore represents the power of the Spirit of God in all noble and useful animal life, conquering what is venomous, useless, or in decay: he differs from St. George in contending with material evil, instead of with sinful passion: the crocodile on which he stands is the Dragon of Egypt; slime-

<sup>1</sup> "He"—the actual piece of forged metal, I mean.

<sup>2</sup> I am a little proud of this guess, for before correcting this sentence in type, I found the sharp old wings represented faithfully in the wood cut of Venice in 1480, in the Correr Museum. Dürer, in 1500, draws the present wings; so that we get their date fixed within twenty years.

## COLUMNS OF THE PIAZZETTA 177

begotten of old, worshipped in its malignant power, for a God. St. Theodore's martyrdom was for breaking such idols; and with beautiful instinct Venice took him in her earliest days for her protector and standard-bearer, representing the heavenly life of Christ in men, prevailing over chaos and the deep.



## THE DUCAL PALACE

JOHN RUSKIN

THE charm which Venice still possesses, and which for the last fifty years has rendered it the favourite haunt of all the painters of picturesque subjects, is owing to the effect of the palaces belonging to the period we have now to examine, mingled with those of the Renaissance.

The effect is produced in two different ways. The Renaissance palaces are not more picturesque in themselves than the club-houses of Pall Mall; but they become delightful by the contrast of their severity and refinement with the rich and rude confusion of the sea life beneath them, and of their white and solid masonry with the green waves. Remove from beneath them the orange sails of the fishing boats, the black gliding of the gondolas, the cumbered decks and rough crews of the barges of traffic, and the fretfulness of the green water along their foundations, and the Renaissance palaces possess no more interest than those of London or Paris. But the Gothic palaces are picturesque in themselves, and wield over us an independent power. Sea and sky, and every other accessory might be taken away from them, and still they would be beautiful and strange. They are not less striking in the loneliest streets of Padua and Vicenza (where many were built during the period of the Venetian authority in those cities) than in the most crowded thoroughfares of Venice



THE DUCAL PALACE, ITALY.



itself; and if they could be transported into the midst of London, they would still not altogether lose their power over the feelings.

The best proof of this is in the perpetual attractiveness of all pictures, however poor in skill, which have taken for their subject the principal of these Gothic buildings, the Ducal Palace. In spite of all architectural theories and teachings, the paintings of this building are always felt to be delightful; we cannot be wearied by them, though often sorely tried; but we are not put to the same trial in the case of the palaces of the Renaissance. They are never drawn singly, or as the principal subject, nor can they be. The building which faces the Ducal Palace on the opposite side of the Piazzetta is celebrated among architects, but it is not familiar to our eyes; it is painted only incidentally, for the completion, not the subject of a Venetian scene; and even the Renaissance arcades of St. Mark's Place, though frequently painted, are always treated as a mere avenue to its Byzantine church and colossal tower. And the Ducal Palace itself owes the peculiar charm which we have hitherto felt, not so much to its greater size as compared with other Gothic buildings, or nobler designs (for it never yet has been rightly drawn), as to its comparative isolation. The other Gothic structures are as much injured by the continual juxtaposition of the Renaissance palaces, as the latter are aided by it; they exhaust their own life by breathing it into the Renaissance coldness: but the Ducal Palace stands comparatively alone, and fully expresses the Gothic power.

And it is just that it should be so seen, for it is the original of nearly all the rest. It is not the elaborate and more studied development of a national style, but the great and sudden invention of one man, instantly forming a national style, and becoming the model for the imitation of every architect in Venice for upwards of a century. It was the determination of this one fact which occupied me the greater part of the time I spent in Venice. It had always appeared to me most strange that there should be in no part of the city any incipient or imperfect types of the form of the Ducal Palace; it was difficult to believe that so mighty a building had been the conception of one man, not only in disposition and detail, but in style; and yet impossible, had it been otherwise, but that some early examples of approximate Gothic form must exist. There is not one. The palaces built between the final cessation of the Byzantine style, about 1300, and the date of the Ducal Palace (1320-1350), are all completely distinct in character, and there is literally *no* transitional form between them and the perfection of the Ducal Palace. Every Gothic building in Venice which resembles the latter is a copy of it. I do not mean that there was no Gothic in Venice before the Ducal Palace, but that the mode of its application to domestic architecture had not been determined. The real root of the Ducal Palace is the apse of the church of the Frari. The traceries of that apse, though earlier and ruder workmanship, are nearly the same in mouldings, and precisely the same in treatment (especially in the placing of the lions' heads), as those of the great Ducal

Arcade; and the originality of thought in the architect of the Ducal Palace consists in his having adopted those tra-  
ceries, in a more highly developed and finished form to civil  
uses.

The reader will observe that the Ducal Palace is arranged somewhat in the form of a hollow square, of which one side faces the Piazzetta, and another the quay called the Riva dei Schiavoni; the third is on the dark canal called the Rio del Palazzo, and the fourth joins the Church of St. Mark.

Of this fourth side, therefore nothing can be seen. Of the other three sides we shall have to speak constantly; and they will be respectively called, that towards the Piazzetta, the "Piazzetta Façade"; and that towards the Riva dei Schiavoni, the "Sea Façade"; and that towards the Rio del Palazzo, the "Rio Façade." This Rio, or canal, is usually looked upon by the traveller with great respect, or even horror, because it passes under the Bridge of Sighs. It is, however one of the principal thoroughfares of the city; and the bridge and its canal together occupy in the mind of a Venetian, very much the position of Fleet Street and Temple Bar in that of a Londoner,—at least at the time when Temple Bar was occasionally decorated with human heads. The two buildings closely resemble each other in form.

We must now proceed to obtain some rough idea of the appearance and distribution of the palace itself; but its arrangement will be better understood by supposing ourselves raised some hundred and fifty feet above the point in the lagoon in front of it, so as to get a general view of the

Sea Façade and Rio Façade (the latter in very steep perspective), and to look down into its interior court. We have merely to notice that, of the two bridges seen on the right, the uppermost, above the black canal, is the Bridge of Sighs; the lower one is the Ponte della Paglia, the regular thoroughfare from quay to quay, and I believe, called the Bridge of Straw, because the boats which brought straw from the mainland used to sell it at this place. The corner of the palace rising above this bridge, and formed by the meeting of the Sea Façade and Rio Façade, will always be called the Vine angle, because it is decorated by a sculpture of the drunkenness of Noah. The angle opposite will be called the Fig-tree angle, because it is decorated by a sculpture of the Fall of Man. The long and narrow range of building, of which the roof is seen in perspective behind this angle, is the part of the palace fronting the Piazzetta; and the angle under the pinnacle most to the left of the two which terminate it will be called the Judgment angle. Within the square formed by the building is seen its interior court (with one of its wells), terminated by small and fantastic buildings of the Renaissance period, which face the Giants' Stair, of which the extremity is seen sloping down on the left.

The great façade which fronts the spectator looks southward. Hence the two traceried windows lower than the rest, and to the right of the spectator, may be conveniently distinguished as the "Eastern Windows." There are two others like them, filled with tracery, and at the same level, which look upon the narrow canal between the Ponte della



Paglia and the Bridge of Sighs: these we may conveniently call the "Canal Windows."

On the party wall, between the second and third windows, which faces the eastern extremity of the Great Council Chamber, is painted the Paradise of Tintoret; and this wall will therefore be hereafter called the "Wall of the Paradise."

In nearly the centre of the Sea Façade, and between the first and second windows of the Great Council Chamber, is a large window to the ground, opening on a balcony, which is one of the chief ornaments of the palace, and will be called in future the "Sea Balcony."

The façade which looks on the Piazzetta is very nearly like this to the Sea, but the greater part of it was built in the Fifteenth Century, when people had become studious of their symmetries. The side windows are all on the same level. Two light the west end of the Great Council Chamber, one lights a small room anciently called the Quarantia Civil Nuova; the other three, and the central one, with a balcony like that to the Sea, light another large chamber, called Sala del Scrutinio, or "Hall of Enquiry," which extends to the extremity of the palace above the Porta della Carta.

The reader is now well enough acquainted with the topography of the existing building to be able to follow the accounts of its history.

The Ducal Palace, which was the great work of Venice, was built successively in the three styles. There was a Byzantine Ducal Palace, a Gothic Ducal Palace, and a Renaissance

Ducal Palace. The second superseded the first totally; a few stones of it (if indeed so much) are all that is left. But the third superseded the second in part only, and the existing building is formed by the union of the two. We shall review the history of each in succession. 1st. The **BYZANTINE PALACE**.

The year of the death of Charlemagne, 813, the Venetians determined to make the island of Rialto the seat of the government and capital of their state. Their Doge, Angelo or Agnello Participazio, instantly took vigorous means for the enlargement of the small group of buildings which were to be the nucleus of the future Venice. He appointed persons to superintend the rising of the banks of sand, so as to form more secure foundations, and to build wooden bridges over the canals. For the offices of religion he built the Church of St. Mark; and on, or near the spot where the Ducal Palace now stands, he built a palace for the administration of the government.

The history of the Ducal Palace therefore begins with the birth of Venice, and to what remains of it, at this day, is entrusted the last representation of her power.

Of the exact position and form of this palace of Participazio little is ascertained. Sansovino says that it was built near the Ponte della Paglia, and answeringly on the Grand Canal towards San Giorgio; that is to say, in the place now occupied by the Sea Façade; but this was merely the popular report of his day. There can be no doubt whatever that the palace at this period resembled and impressed the

other Byzantine edifices of the day, such as the Fondaco dei Turchi, etc.; and that, like them, it was covered with sculpture, and richly adorned with gold and colour.

In the year 1106, it was for the second time injured by fire, but repaired before 1116, when it received another emperor, Henry V. (of Germany), and was again honoured by imperial praise. Between 1173 and the close of the century, it seems to have been again repaired and much enlarged by the Doge Sebastian Ziani. Sansovino says that this Doge not only repaired it, but “enlarged it in every direction”; and after this enlargement, the palace seems to have remained untouched for a hundred years, in the commencement of the Fourteenth Century, the works of the Gothic Palace were begun. The old palace, of which half remains to this day, was built by Sebastian Ziani.

So far, then, of the Byzantine Palace.

2d. The GOTHIC PALACE.—The reader, doubtless, recollects that the important change in the Venetian government which gave stability to the aristocratic power took place about the year 1297, under the Doge Pietro Gradenigo, a man thus characterised by Sansovino:—“A prompt and prudent man, of unconquerable determination and great eloquence, who laid, so to speak, the foundations of the eternity of this republic, by the admirable regulations which he introduced into the government.” The Serra del Consiglio fixed the numbers of the Senate within certain limits, and it conferred upon them a dignity greater than they had ever before possessed. It was natural that the altera-

tion in the character of the assembly should be attended by some change in the size, arrangement, or decoration of the chamber in which they sat.

We accordingly find it recorded by Sansovino, that "in 1301 another saloon was begun on the Rio del Palazzo *under the Doge Gradenigo*, and finished in 1309, *in which year the Grand Council first sat in it.*" In the first year, therefore, of the Fourteenth Century, the Gothic Ducal Palace of Venice was begun; and as the Byzantine Palace, was, in its foundation, coeval with the state, so the Gothic Palace, was, in its foundation, coeval with that of the aristocratic power. Considered as the principal representation of the Venetian school of architecture, the Ducal Palace is the Parthenon of Venice, and Gradenigo its Pericles.

But the newly constituted Senate had need of other additions to the ancient palace besides the Council Chamber. A short, but most significant, sentence is added to Sansovino's account of the construction of that room. "There were *near it*," he says, "the Cancellaria, and the Gheba or Gabbia, afterwards called the Little Tower."

Gabbia means a "cage"; and there can be no question that certain apartments were at this time added at the top of the palace and on the Rio Façade, which were to be used as prisons. Whether any portion of the old Torresella still remains is a doubtful question; but the apartments at the top of the palace, in its fourth story, were still used for prisons as late as the beginning of the Seventeenth Century. I wish the reader especially to notice that

a separate tower or range of apartments was built for this purpose, in order to clear the government of the accusations so constantly made against them, by ignorant or partial historians, of wanton cruelty to prisoners. The stories commonly told respecting the "piombi" of the Ducal Palace are utterly false. Instead of being, as usually reported, small furnaces under the leads of the palace, they were comfortable rooms, with good flat roofs of larch, and carefully ventilated.<sup>1</sup> The new chamber, then, and the prisons, being built, the Great Council first sat in their retired chamber on the Rio in the year 1309.

It appears from the entry still preserved in the Archivio, and quoted by Cadorin, that it was on the 28th of December, 1340, that the commissioners appointed to decide on this important matter gave in their report to the Grand Council, and that the decree passed thereupon for the commencement of a new Council Chamber on the Grand Canal.

The room then begun is the one now in existence, and its building involved the building of all that is best and most beautiful in the present Ducal Palace, the rich arcades of the lower stories being all prepared for sustaining this Sala del Gran Consiglio.

Its decorations and fittings, however, were long in com-

<sup>1</sup> Bettio, Lettera: "Those who wrote without having seen them described them as covered with lead; and those who have seen them know that, between their flat timber roofs and the sloping leaden roof of the palace, the interval is five metres where it is least, and nine where it is greatest."

pletion; the paintings on the roof being only executed in 1400. They represented the heavens covered with stars, this being, says Sansovino, the bearings of the Doge Steno. The Grand Council sat in the finished chamber for the first time in 1423. In that year the Gothic Ducal Palace was completed. It had taken, to build it, the energies of the entire period which I have above described, as the central one of her life.

3rd. The RENAISSANCE PALACE.—I must go back a step or two, in order to be certain that the reader understands clearly the state of the palace in 1423. The works of addition or renovation had now been proceeding, at intervals, during a space of a hundred and twenty-three years. Three generations at least had been accustomed to witness the gradual advancement of the form of the Ducal Palace into more stately symmetry, and to contrast the works of sculpture and painting with which it was decorated,—full of the life, knowledge, and hope of the Fourteenth Century,—with the rude Byzantine chiselling of the palace of the Doge Ziani. The magnificent fabric just completed, of which the new Council Chamber was the nucleus, was now habitually known in Venice as the “Palazzo Nuovo”; and the old Byzantine edifice, now ruinous and more manifest in its decay by its contrast with the goodly stones of the building which had been raised at its side, was of course known as the “Palazzo Vecchio.” That fabric, however, still occupied the principal position in Venice. The new Council Chamber had been erected by the side of it towards

the Sea; but there was not the wide quay in front, the Riva dei Schiavoni, which now renders the Sea Façade as important as that to the Piazzetta. There was only a narrow walk between the pillars and the water; and the *old* palace of Ziani still faced the Piazzetta, and interrupted, by its decrepitude, the magnificence of the square where the nobles daily met. Every increase of the beauty of the new palace rendered the discrepancy between it and the companion building more painful; and then began to arise in the minds of all men a vague idea of the necessity of destroying the old palace, and completing the front of the Piazzetta with the same splendour as the Sea Façade. . . . The Great Council Chamber was used for the first time on the day when Foscari entered the Senate as Doge—the 3rd of April, 1423, . . . and the following year, on the 27th of March, the first hammer was lifted up against the old palace of Ziani.

That hammer stroke was the first act of the period properly called the “Renaissance.” It was the knell of the architecture of Venice,—and of Venice herself.

I have no intention of following out, in their intricate details, the operations which were begun under the Foscari and continued under succeeding Doges till the palace assumed its present form: but the main facts are the following: The palace of Ziani was destroyed; the existing façade to the Piazzetta built, so as both to continue and to resemble, in most particulars, the work of the Great Council Chamber. It was carried back from the Sea as far as the Judg-



ment angle; beyond which is the Porta della Carta, begun in 1439, and finished in two years, under the Doge Foscari; the interior buildings connected with it were added by the Doge Christopher Moro (the Othello of Shakespeare) in 1462.

But whatever buildings, old or new, stood on this spot at the time of the completion of the Porta della Carta were destroyed by another great fire of 1479, together with so much of the palace on the Rio that, though the saloon of Gradenigo, then known as the Sala de' Pregadi, was not destroyed, it became necessary to reconstruct the entire façades of the portion of the palace behind the Bridge of Sighs, both towards the court and canal. This work was entrusted to the best Renaissance architects of the close of the Fifteenth and opening of the Sixteenth Centuries; Antonio Ricci executing the Giant's Staircase, and on his absconding, Pietro Lombardo taking his place. The whole work must have been completed towards the middle of the Sixteenth Century.

But the palace was not long permitted to remain in this finished form. Another terrific fire, commonly called the great fire, burst out in 1574, and destroyed the inner fittings and all the precious pictures of the Great Council Chamber, and of all the upper rooms on the Sea Façade, and most of those on the Rio Façade, leaving the building a mere shell, shaken and blasted by the flames. It was debated in the Great Council whether the ruin should not be thrown down, and an entirely new palace built in its

stead. The opinions of all the leading architects of Venice were taken, respecting the safety of the walls, or the possibility of repairing them as they stood. These opinions, given in writing, have been preserved, and published by the Abbé Cadorin in the work already so often referred to; and they form one of the most important series of documents connected with the Ducal Palace.

The repairs necessarily undertaken at this time were however extensive, and interfere in many directions with the earlier work of the palace: still the only serious alteration in its form was the transposition of the prisons, formerly at the top of the palace, to the other side of the Rio del Palazzo; and the building of the Bridge of Sighs, to connect them with the palace, by Antonio da Ponte. The completion of this work brought the whole edifice into its present form; with the exception of alterations in doors, partitions, and staircases among the inner apartments, not worth noticing, and such barbarisms and defacements as have been suffered within the last fifty years, by, I suppose, nearly every building of importance in Italy.

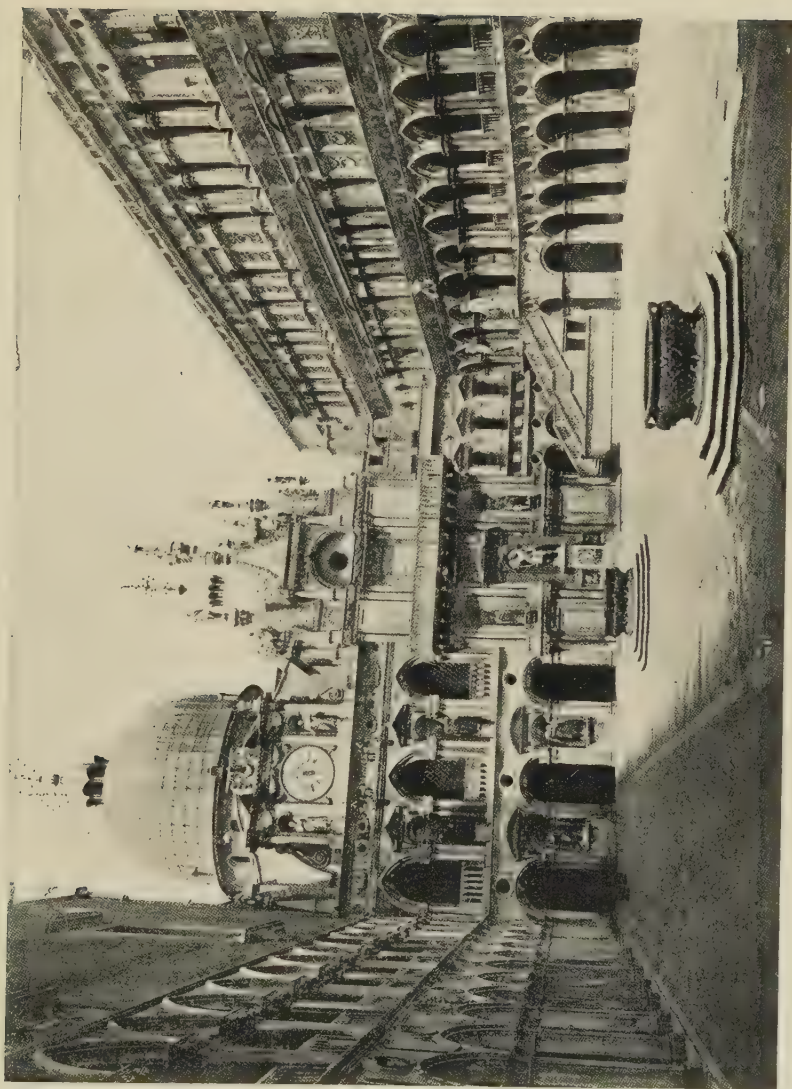
## INTERIOR OF THE DUCAL PALACE

THÉOPHILE GAUTIER

INTO this strange edifice,—at once a palace, senate, tribunal and prison under the government of the Republic,—we enter by a charming door in St. Mark's corner, between the pillars of St. John of Acre and the great, thick column supporting the entire weight of the immense white and rose marble wall that gives such an original aspect to the ancient palace of the Doges.

This door, called Della Carta, is in charming architectural taste, adorned with little columns, trefoils and statues, without counting the inevitable, indispensable winged lion of St. Mark, and leads into the great interior court by a vaulted passage. This somewhat singular arrangement of an entrance so to speak placed without the edifice to which it leads has the advantage of not interfering in any way with the unity of its façades, which are not broken by any projection except that of their monumental windows.

Before passing under the arcade, let us glance over the exterior of the palace to note a few of its interesting details. Above the thick and robust column of which we have just spoken, there is a bas-relief of savage aspect representing the *Judgment of Solomon* with Mediæval costume and a certain barbarity of execution that renders it hard to recognise the subject. The bas-relief opens into the long twisted little columns that cordon each angle of the building.



THE DUCAL PALACE.



On the façade of the Piazzetta, upon the second gallery, two columns of red marble mark the place whence the death sentences were read,—a custom that still exists to-day. All the capitals are in exquisite taste and inexhaustible variety. Not one is a repetition. They contain chimærae, children, angels, fantastic animals, and sometimes Biblical or historical subjects, mingled with foliage, acanthus, fruits and flowers that forcibly show up the poverty of invention of our modern artists: several bear half effaced inscriptions in Gothic characters, which in order to be fluently read would require a skilful paleographer. There are twenty-seven arcades on the Mole and eighteen on the Piazzetta.

The Porta della Carta leads you to the Giants' Staircase, which is not itself gigantic, but takes its name from the two colossi of Neptune and Mars, a dozen feet in height, by Sansovino, standing on pedestals at the top of the flight. This staircase, leading from the courtyard to the second gallery that decks the interior as well as the exterior of the palace, was erected during the dogedom of Agostino Barbarigo by Antonio Rizzo. It is of white marble, decorated by Domenico and Bernardo of Mantua with arabesques and trophies in very slight relief, but of such perfection as to be the despair of all the ornamenters, carvers and engravers in the world. It is no longer architecture, but goldsmith's work, such as Benvenuto Cellini and Vechte alone could produce. Every morsel of this open balustrade is a world of invention; the weapons and

casques of every bas-relief, each one different, are of the rarest fancy and the purest style; even the slabs of the steps are ornamented with exquisite niello, and yet who knows anything of Domenico and Bernardo of Mantua? The memory of mankind, already wearied with a hundred illustrious names, refuses to retain any more, and consigns to oblivion names that are deserving of all glory.

If we turn around on reaching the head of this staircase, we see the inner side of the doorway of Bartolomeo, flowered over with volutes and plated with little columns and statues, with remnants of blue painting starred with gold in the tympanums of the arch. Among the statues, one in particular is very remarkable: it is an Eve by Antonio Rizzio of Verona, carved in 1471. The other side, facing the wells, was built in 1607 in the style of the Renaissance, with columns and niches full of antique statues from Greece, representing warriors, orators, and divinities. A clock and a statue of the Duke Urbino, carved by Gio Bandini of Florence in 1625, complete this severe and classic front.

Letting your glance fall towards the middle of the court, you see what look like magnificent bronze altars. They are the mouths of the cisterns of Nicolo de Conti and Francesco Alberghetti. The first dates from 1556, the second from 1559. Both are masterpieces. Besides the obligatory accompaniment of griffins, sirens, and *chiæræ*, various aquatic subjects taken from the Scriptures, are represented in them. One could not imagine such richness of invention,



such exquisite taste, such perfection of carving, nor such finished work as is displayed by the kerbs of these wells enriched with the polish and verdigris of time. Even the inside of the mouth is plated with thin sheets of bronze branched with a damaskeen of arabesques. These two wells are said to contain the best water in Venice.

Near the Giants' Staircase is an inscription framed with ornaments and figures by Alessandro Vittoria recalling the passage of Henry III. through Venice; and farther on in the gallery at the approach to the golden staircase are two statues by Antonio Aspetti, Hercules and Atlas bending beneath the starry firmament, the weight of which the mighty hero is about to transfer to his own bull-neck. This magnificent staircase, adorned with stuccos by Vittoria and paintings by Giambatista, is by Sansovino and leads to the library which now occupies several rooms of the palace of the Doges. To attempt to describe them one by one would be a work of patience and erudition that would require a whole volume.

The old hall of the Grand Council is one of the largest you could find anywhere. The Court of Lions at the Alhambra would easily go inside it. On entering, you stand still, struck with astonishment. By an effect that is somewhat frequently found in architecture, this hall looks much larger than the building that contains it. A sombre and severe wainscoting where bookcases have taken the place of the seats of the old senators, serves as a plinth for immense paintings that extend all around the walls, broken

only by windows, below a line of portraits of the Doges and a colossal gilded ceiling of incredible exuberance of ornamentation, with great compartments, square, octagonal and oval, with foliage, volutes, and rock-work in a taste scarcely appropriate to the style of the palace, but so imposing and magnificent that you are quite dazzled by it. Unfortunately the pictures by Paul Veronese, Tintoret, Palma the Younger, and other great masters, that filled these superb frames have now been removed on account of indispensable repairs.

That side of the hall by which you enter is entirely occupied by a gigantic *Paradise* by Tintoret, which contains a world of figures. It is a strong painting and it is a pity that time has so greatly darkened it. The smoky shadows that cover it belong to a Hell rather to a Glory. Behind this canvas, a fact that we have not been in a position to verify, it is said that there is an ancient *Paradise* painted in green camaieu upon the wall by Guariento of Padua in 1365. It would be curious to be able to compare this green *Paradise* with the black one. It is only Venice that has one depth of painting below another.

This hall is a kind of Versailles museum of Venetian history, with the difference that if the exploits are not so great, the painting is far better. It is impossible to imagine a more wonderful effect than is produced by this immense hall entirely covered by these pompous paintings that excel in the Venetian genius. Above these great historical scenes is a row of portraits of the Doges by Tin-

toret, Bassano, and other painters; as a rule they have a smoky and bearded appearance, although, contrary to the impression we form, they have no beards. In one corner the eye is arrested at an empty and black frame that makes a hole as dark as a tomb in this chronological gallery. It is the space that should be occupied by the portrait of Marino Faliero, as told by this inscription: *Locus Marini Phaletri, decapitati pro criminibus*. All the effigies of Marino Faliero were also destroyed, so that his portrait may be said to be undiscoverable. However, it is pretended that there is one in the possession of an amateur at Verona. The republic wanted to destroy the memory of this haughty old man who brought it within an inch of ruin in revenge for a youth's jest that was sufficiently punished by a few month's imprisonment. To finish with Marino Faliero, let us note that he was not beheaded at the head of the Giants' Staircase, as is represented in several prints, since that stairway was not built till a hundred and fifty years later, but in the opposite corner at the other end of the gallery, upon the top of a flight of steps since demolished.

We will now name the most celebrated chambers of the palace without pretending to describe them in detail. In the chamber *dei Scarlatti* the chimney-piece is covered with marble reliefs of the finest workmanship. On the impost also is seen a very curious bas-relief in marble representing the Doge Loredan on his knees before the Virgin and Child, accompanied by several saints,—an admirable piece of work by an unknown artist. The Hall of the Shield:

here the arms of the living Doge were emblazoned. It is hung with geographical charts by the Abbé Grisellini that trace the discoveries of Marco Polo, so long treated as fabulous, and of other illustrious Venetian travellers, such as Zeni and Cabota. Here also is kept a globe, found on a Turkish galley, engraved upon wood and of strange configuration being in accordance with Oriental ideas and covered with Arabic characters cut with marvellous delicacy; also a great bird's-eye view of Venice by Albert Dürer, who made a long stay in the city of the Doges. The aspect of the city is generally the same as to-day, since for three centuries one stone has not been laid upon another in the Italian cities.

In the Hall of the Philosophers a very beautiful chimney-piece by Pietro Lombardo is to be noticed. The Hall of Stuccos, so called because of its ornamentation, contains paintings by Salviati, Pordenone, and Bassano: the *Virgin*, a *Descent from the Cross*, and the *Nativity of Jesus Christ*. The banquet-hall is where the Doge used to give certain feasts of etiquette,—diplomatic dinners, as we should say to-day. Here we see a portrait of Henry III. by Tintoret, very strong and very fine; and facing the door is the *Adoration of the Magi*, a warm painting by Bonifazio, that great master of whose work we possess scarcely anything in Paris. The Hall of the Four Doors has a square anteroom, the ceiling of which, painted by Tintoret, represents Justice giving the sword and scales to the Doge Priuli. The four doors are adorned with statues of grand form by Giulio

del Moro, Francesco Caselli, Girolamo Campagna, and Alessandro Vittoria; the paintings that enrich the room are masterpieces.

From this hall let us pass into the Anti-Collegio: it is the waiting-room of the ambassadors, the architecture being by Scamozzi. The envoys of the various powers who came to present their credentials to the Most Serene Republic could scarcely have been in a hurry to be introduced: the masterpieces crowded with such lavishness into this splendid anteroom would induce any one to be patient. The four pictures near the door are by Tintoret, and among his best. These are the subjects: *Mercury and the Graces*; *Vulcan's Forge*; *Pallas, accompanied by Joy and Abundance, chasing Mars*; and *Ariadne consoled by Bacchus*. Apart from a few rather forced foreshortenings and a few violent attitudes in which this master took pleasure on account of their difficulty, we can do nothing but praise the virile energy of touch, the warmth of colour, the truth of the flesh, the life-like power and that forceful and charming grace that distinguishes mighty talents when they have to render sweet and gentle subjects.

But the marvel of this sanctuary of art is the *Rape of Europa*, by Paul Veronese. What lovely white shoulders! what blonde curling tresses! what round and charming arms! what smiles of eternal youth in this wonderful canvas in which Paul Veronese seems to have spoken his final word! Sky, clouds, trees, flowers, meadows, seas, tints, draperies, all seem bathed in the glow of an unknown

Elysium. If we had to choose one single example of all Paul Veronese's work, this is the one we should prefer: it is the most beautiful pearl in this rich casket.

On the ceiling the great artist has seated his dear Venice on a golden throne with that amplitude of drapery and that abundant grace of which he possesses the secret. For this *Assumption*, in which Venice takes the place of the Virgin, he always knows how to find fresh blues and new radiance.

The magnificent chimney-piece by Aspetti, a stucco cornice by Vittoria and Bombarda, blue camaïeu by Sebastian Rizzi, and columns of *verde antique* and Cipolin marble framing the door complete this marvellous decoration in which shines the most beautiful of all luxuries, that of genius.

The reception-hall, or the Collegio, comes next. Here we find Tintoret and Paul Veronese, the former red and violent, the other azure and calm; the first, suited to great expanses of wall, the second, for immense ceilings. We will not speak of the camaïeu, the *grisailles*, the columns of *verde antique*, the little arches of flowered jasper and sculptures by G. Campagna: we should never finish and those are the ordinary sumptuous details in the palace of the Doges.

There are many other admirable rooms in the Ducal Palace that we have not mentioned. The Hall of the Council of Ten, the Hall of the Supreme Council, the Hall of the State Inquisitors, and many others. Upon their walls and ceilings sit side by side the apotheosis of Venice and the Assumption of the Virgin; the Doges on

their knees before some Madonnas or other; and mythological heroes or fabulous gods; the Lion of St. Mark and Jupiter's eagle; the Emperor Frederick Barbarossa and a Neptune; Pope Alexander III. and a short-kilted Allegory; mix up stories from the Bible and holy Virgins beneath baldaquins with captures of Zara embroidered with more numerous episodes than one of Ariosto's songs, surprises of Candia and jumbles of Turks; carve the doorcases; cover the cornices with mouldings and stucco; set up statues in every corner; lay gold upon everything that is not covered by the brush of a superior artist; say: "All those who have laboured here, even the obscure, had twenty times as much talent as our celebrities of the present day; and the greatest masters have employed their lives here"; and then you will have a feeble idea of all this magnificence that defies description. Painters, whose names are not uttered once a century, here hold their place in most terrible proximities. You would say that genius was in the air at that climacteric epoch of human progress and that nothing was easier than to produce masterpieces. The sculptors especially, of whom no one ever speaks, display extraordinary talent and are not in the least inferior to the greatest painters.



## THE CARNIVAL

CHARLES YRIARTE

AT the Carnival it is from the Piazza and the Piazzetta that the processions start and all the exhibitions and performances of this mad season. And everything takes place to-day just as it did yesterday and as it did two hundred, or even five hundred years ago, as is shown in a pretty composition by Vanutelli which we found in the Gallery of the Princess Matilda. The painter has placed his scene under the arcades of the Ducal Palace; it is there that to-day a whole troupe of masqueraders come to play their *lazzi*, for the Carnival of Venice, which is just as celebrated as the Roman Carnival and which has served as a theme for poets and musicians and on which Gozzi, Paganini and Théophile Gautier have embroidered their *Pizzicati*, is not so dead as people would have us believe; the tradition exists if the genius of the people has changed. The Carnival week, though quieter than it used to be, still attracts strangers; it is the season of intrigues and festivals when the entire population seems intoxicated by the very air. There are two very distinct parts in the Carnival of Venice: the carnival of the street and the carnival of the drawing-room. Not long ago people went masqued to St. Mark's Place and the Fenice, and gave themselves up to merry mystifications that recalled the good old days of Venice in the



PIAZZETTA WITH CORNER OF DOGE'S PALACE



Eighteenth Century; this was the age of supper-parties, barcarolles, serenades and Venetian festivals, which last words include everything. To-day the aristocracy is reserved and discreet; a few swell masquerades, a few masqued balls given in a setting worthy of the costumes, a few gay suppers and a few serenades, and the festival is over. Guardi, the painter of delicate touch, the piquant colourist, shows us the balls in the Ducal Palace, the *Ridotti*, the promenaders on the Piazza with their black velvet masques, their three cornered hats, and that Venetian cloak that has become the livery for carnival gaieties throughout Europe. Of all this nothing remains now, and what is left is difficult to describe and would escape the notice of a passing stranger; one must be of Venetian origin to enter, or even be admitted to, these pleasures and to appreciate their charm.

But the street is more lively; the corporations club together and give the city a show; each year they have a new idea and a new way of executing it: an allegorical car, a Bucentaur, a scene full of life and colour in which the celebrated heroes, Vesta Zenda and Tato are seen, and the illustrious Pantaloon harangues the crowd from his throne erected on the Piazzetta in front of the two large granite columns. Pantaloon has arrived at the head of his procession which assembled in the court of the deserted convent of San Sepolcra; he goes the whole length of the Riva dei Schiavoni, preceded by his Turkish guards; bridges have been thrown across the canals that intersect the quay, so that nothing interrupts the masquerade along its route.

The painters of the Arsenal and painters of other buildings, all in costume, form a guild and sing choruses; other civic guilds form themselves into brass bands, for there are no festivals without music in Venice.

The procession is long and the whole city follows it; the banners that are carried in front of it are borne by men dressed as Turks, and another body pretends to guard them; behind them follow the Chioggiotti, the fish-vendors of Chioggia, who carry on their arms elegant baskets filled with fish made of sugar, which they throw into the balconies all along the way; and the whole street presents a number of those grotesque scenes that have been preserved by Guardi's brush.

After the Chioggiotti, who have their own band, usually costumed in mediæval dress, come the *Epigrams* of the year: these are monster masques, gigantic personages who recall those occurring in the carnivals of the northern cities of France; they are numerous and always represent a satirical epigram in allusion to a celebrity of the season, or some actual event is symbolised by each person. Often a political personage is chosen for the allusion, and many times, indeed, the authorities have had to intervene and prevent the caricature of a foreign minister or sovereign.

After the great masques come groups of all kinds, following according to popular fancy; but there is nearly always a general idea for the whole procession, the burlesque groups forming detached episodes, framed in the whole; nobody is deceived by anything and there is great applause.

Arriving at the Piazzetta, Pantaloon, who is king of the festival, mounts his throne and harangues the crowd in Venetian dialect, and, as he can wag his tongue glibly, the people reward him with acclamations. He descends, resumes his place at the head of the procession and goes to the Piazza, in the centre of which a circular ball-room, about the height of the Café Florian and Café Quadri, has been erected. The orchestra takes its place and the most important masquers lead the dances; the Piazza is filled, and the crowd is lively, joyous and bright with colour; a great number of people wear fancy costumes and take an active part in the amusements.

This is the overture to the popular festival, the inauguration of the Carnival, and as these people thoroughly understand how to provide amusements, every day brings a new pleasure and surprise. In the evening the Piazza we are describing is fairy-like; it is very brilliantly lighted by a method used only on these occasions: if it is fine weather you can walk about in dancing-shoes, for as the Piazza is paved, it is a veritable ball-room; the *cafés* are crowded at this time; the tables are even carried into the middle of the Piazza and you can stroll about in the open air as if you were at a gigantic ball.

## RIVA DEI SCHIAVONI

JULIA CARTWRIGHT

NEXT to the Piazza the Riva dei Schiavoni is, perhaps, the most attractive place in Venice. It is not only for the sake of the view, although that is magnificent, or for S. Giorgio—best beloved of all lesser Venetian shrines—opposite; but it is because there you see whatever is left of the vivacity and joyousness of Venetian life. At Florian's you may see the more elegant side of society, more of the dandies and the well dressed ladies, and the foreigners and tourists, but on the Riva you have the life of the people.

This is the place for the artist who knows dexterously to combine groups of figures with shipping and buildings. He has but to take his stand on a balcony overlooking the Riva, or under the vine-trellis of one of the numerous *cafés*, or *osterias*, along the quay, and he will see every type and variety conceivable. Sailors of all countries throng the doors, ships from all parts of the world are seen by the side of those red and orange Chioggia sails, which are familiar objects in all Venetian drawings. The scene is always lively and amusing. From early dawn the shrill voices of the street-sellers make themselves heard under your windows. The cries "*Aqua! polenta! pomi d'oro, limonada!*" mingle with those of shell and bead-sellers, of flower-girls and fishermen,





RIVA DEGLI SCHIAVONI



praising their wares, of gondoliers, and *facchini* seeking custom or quarrelling among themselves, and cursing each other's remotest descendants in the most voluble language.

Towards mid-day a change comes over the scene. There is a lull in the busy traffic, a pause in the movement of the crowd. The cries become fewer and feebler, until by degrees they die out entirely, and slumber creeps over the noisiest and most pertinacious vendors of anise-water and macaroni. Those two gondoliers, who half-an-hour ago were calling heaven and earth to witness the eternal hatred which they vowed against each other, are peacefully sleeping side by side, on the steps of the quay, in the most confiding trustfulness. Even the little, sharp-faced fruit-seller, who has been crying the ambrosial sweetness of his peaches, exactly under your window, until you wonder he has any voice left, is silent now, and leans against his stall, nodding his head over the piles of ripe fruit before him. Sleep has overtaken all alike, and the only voices to be heard proceed from parties of indefatigable English, who, intent on pursuing their daily round of sight-seeing regardless of the sun's meridian power, come in search of a gondolier. As the hours go by, and the heat of the day passes, another change comes over the Riva. A steamer arrives, there is a rush of people to the quay, the sleeping mummies on the pavement lift their heads and rise slowly to their feet. One by one the sellers return, the cries begin exactly as before, only a trifle shriller and more persistent than before. The plot thickens as the afternoon wears away,

and a fresh breeze springs up from the lagoon. Guitar-players and barrel-organs wake the echoes, marionettes and puppet-shows attract small crowds of children and idlers, boatmen and beggars return to the charge with the vigour of giants refreshed with wine, the bargaining and the wrangling and shouting become louder and more bewildering than ever.

And now it is the hour of promenade, when the beauty and fashion of Venice take the air, and you may see ladies wrapped in lace mantillas go by, wearing gold or pearl pins in their hair and waving large fans to and fro as they walk, followed by groups of friends and admirers. They are dark-eyed beauties for the most part, but occasionally you may see a maiden with the golden hair which Tintoret and Paris Bordone loved to paint, and you may be sure *la biondina* will excite more than one exclamation of frank admiration from the passers-by. Often the handsomest faces are those of the women of the humbler classes, who also come out to take the air on the Riva at this hour. Some of them wear large straw hats, and others heavy gold chains and earrings, and often silver arrows stuck through their classically braided tresses, while all, whatever their dress may be, have a gaily-coloured handkerchief on their shoulders.

The scene on the sea is as lively as that on shore. The lagoon swarms with gondolas and *barcas*, and the bright colours of the striped awnings and crimson or blue and white scarves of the gondoliers enliven the blackness of the boats

as they go flitting by across the waters. Now and then the note of a guitar is heard from a gondola, and if it be a *festà* a boatful of men and boys are sure to be there, singing in their rich musical voices the *refrain* of the favourite chorus:

*"Venezia, gemma triatica, sposa del mar,"*

the one perpetual strain of which Venetian boatmen never seem to tire.

So it all goes on for hours, the music and the voices and the movement of feet passing up and down, while the western sun is pouring its glory over the shore, and Ducal Palace and lagoon and the tall campanile of S. Giorgio yonder are steeped in one rosy glow.

Long after it has dropped into the sea, and the stars have come out in the sky, they will be promenading, talking, and laughing still, and the voices will wax merrier, and the laughter more joyous as the pleasant twilight hour deepens. But if you have had enough of the noise and of the dazzling brightness which does at last begin to weary your eyes in Venice, you have only to turn a few steps aside from the gay Riva, and stand on the lonely bridge which joins it to the Piazzetta. It is called the Ponte della Paglia, and crosses the narrow channel which flows between the Palace and the Prisons. There it is silent enough, and no one will disturb you as you look down at the dark waters lapping the massive cornices and iron bound windows of the majestic Rio façade. Not a sound breaks the stillness,

except it be the hum of distant voices and music on the Riva, or the splash of an oar as a solitary gondola comes stealing along by the blackened walls, and under the tomb-like structure of the Bridge of Sighs, hanging in mid-air as if it had been flung aloft on purpose to catch the moonbeams which go straying into the waters below. It is to these sudden contrasts that we owe half the charm of Venice.

## BY SIDE CANALS

LINDA VILLARI

IN a forlorn corner of Venice, not far from the Madonna dell' Orto, where Cima da Conegliano's great picture is enshrined, we come to the grass-grown Campo St. Avis, with its blistered garden walls and cluster of crumbling buildings. There is plenty of time to look about us before the bottle-nosed custodian comes shuffling over the bridge with the keys of the little-frequented church. We have come to seek the earliest productions of Carpaccio, and here they are on the wall of the nave, eight in all and mere daubs, although the promising daubs of a gifted twelve-year-old boy. They are scenes from the Old Testament—*Job and his Comforters; Solomon and the Queen of Sheba; Tobit and the Angel; Moses and the Tables of the Law; the Golden Calf; Joshua before the Walls of Jericho; Joseph's Brethren Imploring Forgiveness; Jacob and Rachel at the Well.*

These early efforts of the future illustrator of the legends of St. George, St. Ursula, St. Jerome, etc., have little historic worth, but much historic interest, since all crudity and stiffness notwithstanding, they show the budding dramatic power and keen observation of the future master. And they are the only records of his youth, for few details are known of Carpaccio's life. Even the date of his birth is uncertain,



but may be placed towards the middle of the Fifteenth Century, as he was an aged man at the time of his death in 1524. The first of his great works is dated 1490, the last 1522. It is a disputed point whether his name was Scarpaccia or Carpaccio, a disputed point whether he was a native of Venice or Istria; but recent research has almost decided this question in favour of the latter place. The St. Avis panels bear the painter's usual signature. In the quaint representation of Jacob's meeting with Rachel, we at once notice the horse stooping to feed. The action is very truthful, and the forelegs have the defect—disproportionate length—common to all Carpaccio's horses. But, as in his after works, the story is capitally told, the central idea seized, although the brush is feebly handled, and the drawing that of a child.

This poverty-stricken church must once have seen better days, for it possesses several excellent works of art. There is a fresco by Bonifazio—*The Last Supper*—almost identical in composition with the oil-painting by the same master in the Florence Academy. The Judas is specially remarkable as a study in red and brown. Here, too, are a couple of Tiepolo's *chefs d'œuvre*: the *Scourging in the Temple*, and *Christ Sinking Under the Cross*. They are noble paintings both for colour and design, and painted in the master's most serious mood. No frolicsome angels mar the solemnity of the themes. Nevertheless, like all this master's works, they bear a prophetic kinship with those of the French school of thirty years back. They might have strayed from



SANUDO VANAXEL CANAL



the walls of the Luxembourg to this decaying Venetian church.

The last of the Venetian colourists is unfortunate in his surroundings, for some of his best productions are hidden in the Palazzo Labia, in the Canareggio quarter, near the railway station, and are seldom discovered by strangers. The palace stands sideways to the canal, divided from it by a stretch of pavement. It fronts an unsavoury Fondamento, whence, after ringing at a blistered door, you pass into a spacious entrance hall, foul with odours unmentionable and strewn with flakes of plaster dropped from the cracked and bulging vault above. A grandiose staircase faces the mouldy courtyard in the centre of the block. Ascending its grimy steps, you are met by a frowzy portress, fit guardian of decay, whose slip-shod feet lead the way into a lofty saloon with wide cracks in the walls and depressions in the floor corresponding with the unsightly bulges seen from below. Here are Tiepolo's frescoes of the loves of Antony and Cleopatra, and the Allegory of Fortune. The visitor's first impression is one of blank disappointment, for the story of the Egyptian queen is coarsely treated, though vigorous in design; and this buxom, blowzy Cleopatra, with ruff and stomacher and powdered toupee, so ostentatiously melting her pearl before the enamoured eyes of her Roman General, is, to say the least, a droll anachronism. But there is a charming group of pipers and trumpeters in the background, delicate, vaporous figures, somewhat after the manner of Hamon. On the opposite wall is seen the arrival of Mark Antony,

and on the ceiling the Allegory of Fortune, a truly excellent work. It is sad that treasures like these should be left to perish amid all this dust and decay! A school of mosaic workers occupies the front rooms, and you have to pick your way among heaps of glass cubes, pots of cement, and a confusion of benches, tables and boys, to obtain a view of the remaining pictures. The rest of the building is let off to tenants of the poorest class who air their rags on the sculptured window-sills and balconies.

*Sic transit gloria mundi!* About a century ago this massive Renaissance palace was the meeting-place of the fashionable world, for the Labia exercised a princely hospitality, and had a private theatre, where many operas were acted by marionettes and sung by good artists behind the scenes.

On the same day, we gained admittance to the Palazzo Morosini, at Santo Stefano, one of the best preserved relics of olden Venice. It still belongs to the Morosini, and the present representative of the family allows it to be seen by special appointment. Landing at the water-door in a dark and narrow canal, you are received by ancient serving-men with shrunken faces and loosely hanging coats, and ushered straight into the Seventeenth Century. The chilly entrance hall is adorned with quaint oil sketches of the thirty-seven strongholds captured by Francesco Morosini in the Morea. The huge lanterns of his war-galley project from the end wall. There are full-length portraits of the conquering Doge and of many illustrious ancestors. The Maggiordomo appears and gravely leads you up-stairs into a long suite of

saloons with gorgeous uncomfortable furniture, a large collection of pictures—good, bad and indifferent—quantities of rare old china of Eastern and native fabric, and innumerable relics of the hero of the house, Doge Francesco, surnamed the “Peloponesiaco.” There is his bust in bronze, with memorials of his prowess; and the resolute features are those of a leader of men. The one thing lacking to this typical Venetian dwelling is an outlook on to the Grand Canal. Nearly all the windows open upon the “Calle Stretta,” or into mildewed courts; and the only sunny corner, at the angle of Piazza Santo Stefano, is devoted to the armoury, filled with spoils of victory over the Turks. A forest of infidel banners and flags droop from the walls in heavy silken folds, amid a store of Pasha’s tails, shields, trophies of arms and armour, guns and mortars, statues, busts and bas-reliefs. This fortunate general captured no less than 1,360 pieces of artillery, and evidently looted on a vast scale, inasmuch as the lion’s share of his gains must have gone to the State. The sun streamed into this picturesque hall and through its wide casements. We looked on to the flower-filled terrace of Countess Morosini’s private rooms.

The gem of the picture gallery is Titian’s portrait of Doge Grîmiani: a marvellous painting of an astute old face, with piercing narrow eyes and seamed with countless wrinkles. His union with Morosina Morosini can hardly have been a love match, on the lady’s part at all events. Beside this masterpiece hangs a good Sir Peter Lely, representing a

bouncing blonde with frank blue eyes, supposed to be the portrait of Christina of Sweden.

The collection naturally includes many scenes of Venetian life by the prolific Longhi; they are very inferior to those in the possession of Mr. Rawdon Browne, but there are some female heads in pastel by the same master which are specimens of his best work.

This home of the Morosini is almost the only notable Venetian palace still owned by the family for whom it was built, and no other has retained so rich a collection of art-treasures and relics. But even at burning mid-day it was cold—cold as the grave. Surely, only disembodied spirits could take their ease in those stiff and chilly saloons! We could imagine the long-deceased Doge and a select company of family ghosts gravely stalking through them by night, and trying to warm themselves by sipping hot coffee—for which the Doge had acquired a taste in the East—from the dainty cups so primly ranged on shelves during the day. That there are ghosts in Venice is known to everyone. Is not that fine grim-fronted palace at the turn of the canal, *Palazzo Contarini delle Figure*, perpetually changing hands, because no tenant can long endure its mighty horrors? The present owner has stripped it of its furniture in the hope of getting rid of the ghosts, but no one takes it, and its supernatural occupants now have it all to themselves.



## *SOME CHURCHES OF VENICE*

*HENRY PERL*

THE localities adjacent to the Rialto are those in which the larger mercantile affairs of the city are carried on. But although it is so especially the resort of business men, it must be understood that the entire neighbourhood is not lacking in objects of rich architectural interest. One of the most remarkable of these is the Church of the Madonna dei Miracoli, to which we may now direct our steps. In itself it is so complete, that, with respect to its purity alike of form and style, it may almost be said to stand alone.

The church dates from the early Renaissance, and shows at the same time some slight tendency towards the mediæval Byzantine style. The name of the original architect is uncertain, but the design was no doubt carried out faithfully in 1481 under the supervision of Pietro Lombardo. Many of the paintings in the interior are of the highest value, but besides these the elaborate perforations and exquisite finish of the stonework demand a careful inspection. From an artistic point of view, the Church "dei Miracoli" must be reckoned amongst the most striking of the architectural works that ever were accomplished by the genius and energy of the Lombardi family. Its charm lies primarily in the perfect harmony of its proportion, and this has been more completely

revealed since the cultivated taste of modern days has insisted on the removal of the various altars, statues and other erections, which had so encroached upon the area as to mar the purity of the proper outlines. As it is seen at present, it is the pearl of Venetian churches.

Only a short distance from the Church dei Miracoli, we shall come upon another architectural gem of the days of old. This is the pointed arabesque archway that forms the entrance to what is known as the "Corte della Monache." It is a happy combination of the Moorish with the Gothic style.

Almost close by this is the "Campo Tiziano," in which is situated the house which Titian occupied from 1531 to 1576. Going on straight ahead—or, as the Venetians say, *sempre dritto*—we soon arrive at the Piazza San Giovanni e Paolo, and there we find ourselves in full view both of the church of the same name and of the Municipal Hospital. Opposite is an equestrian statue to the memory of Bartolomeo Colleoni, who was a general of high renown in the time of the Republic. Adjoining the Church of San Giovanni e Paolo is the Scuola di San Marco, remarkable for the singular reliefs in perspective of two lions which adorn it. This is now a hospital.

Opposite San Giovanni e Paolo the road leads towards San Lorenzo, whence we proceed towards the Greek Church and the treasury of San Giorzio dei Greci. This is no doubt one of the most curious and striking quarters of Venice, being in a large degree made up of palatial residences, often beautiful in themselves, but almost all deserted.



CHURCH OF S. ZACCARIA



## SOME CHURCHES OF VENICE 219

The Church of San Lorenzo was originally a convent belonging to the Benedictine Order. Its history dates from about 1000 A. D., but the fabric itself was not built till 1595, when it was proceeded with under very favourable auspices. The singular circumstance is recorded that, at the very commencement of the undertaking, the workmen who were digging out the excavations for the foundation came upon two of the huge jars known as "zare," and which are still in use for holding water. These were found to be full up to the brim of gold coins. There was no doubt as to how the treasure had come there. The money had been the property of Angela Michiel, an abbess of the convent, who had thus buried her wealth for security after the murder of her brother, the Doge Vincenzo Michiel.

As we are strolling about, we shall be sure to find ourselves before long opposite the Church of San Giorgio dei Greci, and we may well pause for a while to look at it. It was in 1498 that the Greeks resident in Venice, some merchants, others fugitives from the Turks, formed a resolution to erect a Greek church, and obtained the requisite permission to carry out the design.

One of the other passages close by is the Calle San Antonino, and leads to the church after which it is named. This church was founded in the Ninth Century; but the ancient structure was removed and the edifice rebuilt in the Sixteenth Century, so that it now presents comparatively little of interest.

On the right, the Fondamenta leads to another church—

that of San Giorgio degli Schiavoni—where, besides a bas-relief by Pietro da Salo bearing date 1551, there is preserved the noteworthy series, by Carpaccio, of scenes illustrating the lives of the saintly patrons of Dalmatia and Albania. We need only retrace our steps for a short way, leaving this little church of San Antonino, and we shall come to the Campo della Bragola, and nearly opposite to us we shall see the Palazzo Badoer, bearing one of the oldest names in Venetian history. The building is Fourteenth Century pointed work, and the walls still retain traces of fresco-paintings. The Campo altogether may be justly regarded as a type of mediæval Venice. It contains a church dedicated to San Giovanni in Bragola.

Leading from the Zattere are several ways into the labyrinthine passages of Venice. We decide to turn into the Calle del Vento, and so reach the Fondamenta San Sebastiano, in which of course, we also find the Church of San Sebastiano. It was here the Paolo Veronese was buried, and the church can boast of possessing a goodly number of his most valued paintings. From the twenty-seventh to the thirty-first year of his age he was employed by the prior to adorn the walls of the building. It was very probably due to this commission that Paolo Caliario came from Verona to Venice, where he depicted the city in its glory and gained for himself a world-wide reputation. Seen from the outside the church is quite unpretentious, but some of the pictures that embellish the interior are masterpieces by Veronese. Amongst them are the *Martyrdom of S. Sebastian* and the *Martyrdom of*

*SS. Mark and Marcellinus.* One of the altar-pieces is a powerful picture by Titian, and a circumstance that gives it an exceptional interest is that it was painted when the artist was in his eighty-sixth year. The mortal remains of Paolo Veronese lie just below a bust of him, and a Latin inscription certifies the fact.

From this church we pass through a little piazza that has almost a rural character, and brings us to the Church of San Angelo Raffaele, which is another monument of art. The sculptured fountain in the middle of the Campo San Raffaele is by Marco Arian, of the date of 1349, and is one of the only two authenticated works by him in Venice. Hardly any church enjoys a greater popularity than San Angelo, and the piazza is from time to time bright with the festival processions crossing it. The ceremonial observed with the keenest zest, and therefore the most attractive, takes place on St. John the Baptist's Day, which falls on the 24th of June. A considerable number of little children from two to four years of age are dressed up in lamb-skins, lavishly adorned with flowers, and each provided with a candle that, like themselves, is gay with blossoms and coloured ribbons. Many of them wear dazzling crowns upon their heads, and personate the infant Baptist. In this way they form a leading feature in the procession, which is certainly very imposing.

The neighbourhood round San Raffaele and near S. Nicolo dei Mendicanti is one of the poorest, and at the same time one of the most characteristic, in Venice. The little church of S. Nicolo has not been without its significance in



the history of the lagoons, inasmuch as it gave the name of the "Nicolotti" to the residents within its parochial bounds, the sworn foes of the Castellani, and the eager partakers in the Herculean sports there described.

At this end of the city more than anywhere else we realise that Venice is actually an island traversed by navigable canals which the great and mighty have at intervals adorned with buildings, most of them ranking as works of art.

Here, as so often happens, we find as we go along either from San Sebastiano, or San Raffaele that the monotony of the long and cleanly-kept Fondamenta is relieved by some small piazza. On one of these stands a church of high repute known as "I Carmini," whence both the Campo and the adjacent bridge have derived their name. The popularity that the church enjoys is exceptionally great, and is to be largely, if not entirely, attributed to the circumstance of its being dedicated to the Madonna del Carmelo, who is generally supposed to be identical with the Madonna di Loretto. The yearly festival of the Madonna, which is held in the month of July, is observed with especial honour, and is an occasion when the Patriarch of Venice, generally attends and himself celebrates High Mass.

From the Marittima we cross a bridge and come upon a pretty piazza that is almost Dutch in its aspect; this is the Campo Sant' Andrea, the church having the same name and facing the Canal di Marittima. It is only on Sundays and festivals that this church is open for service, and it is attended almost exclusively by sailors.

## SOME CHURCHES OF VENICE 223

The Frari Church is the Pantheon of Venice. For even the most cursory and superficial inspection of it a quiet uninterrupted hour is required. Not only does it contain the monuments of many eminent men who are buried here, but there are numerous portraits and pictures that must detain attention. First we must name the Mausoleums of Pesaro and Titian, and what, perhaps, in an artistic sense will be accounted more important still, the Monument to Canova.

## ALL SOULS' DAY

HORATIO F. BROWN

THE Italians keep their Lemuria or festival for the dead, not in May, as their Roman ancestors did, but in November. The 2nd of November, All Souls' Day, and its octave are more generally observed than any other of the minor holy days in the Roman calendar. No festival could so unite all classes of people as this, on which each family pays the tribute of memory to its lost ones, and acknowledges the power of that great Democrat, Death. Every day throughout the octave, the churches of Venice recite a mass for the souls of those who are gone and implore for them the intercession of All Saints, whose festival comes immediately before the day of the dead. In the evening another service is held, a little after sundown. There is a sermon; and then begins the lighting of candles all through the church, before each altar and round the catafalque in the centre. It is upon the vigil of All Souls, the "notte dei Morti" as it is called, and at the church of the Gesuati, upon the Zattere, that the greatest illumination takes place. The Gesuati is that late Palladian church, built of Istrian stone, almost opposite the nobler façade of the Redentore, and more formally known as Santa Maria del Rosario. The church is called the Gesuati because hard by—but long before the foundation of this present building, which dates from the



IL SANTISSIMO REDENTORE



last century only—the company of the Blessed John Colombini, which was called the Gesuati, first established itself in the year 1392. Among the other pious duties of the brotherhood was that of supplying and carrying the torches at funerals, and hence it comes that the Gesuati makes this display of light every 2nd of November. The order of the Blessed John was suppressed in the year 1668; but the Dominicans who succeeded the Gesuati in the possession of their monastery and church continue the custom of the candles.

Outside, over the main door of the church is a large black-board, and, in white letters, an invitation to all good Christians to pray for the souls of the departed. Round this table hangs a wreath of laurel leaves, twined on a black and white ribbon. Every other door of the church has a similar garland above it. The sun is setting in a cold and cloudless sky, serene and almost hard. In the zenith the colour is deep blue, but towards the west a thin film of gold is spread where the sun is sinking. The wind comes fine and searching, as it so often does on an autumn evening. The broad and rippled waters of the Giudecca Canal seem as hard as the sky they reflect.

Inside the church, through the open door where the women troop, pulling their shawls up over their heads as they enter, all is dark and gloomy, every column, pilaster, and architrave draped in black cloth with silver fringes; and wreaths of laurel are twined round each pillar's base. The high altar is hidden by a towering cenotaph, raised in the middle

of the nave; against its blackness the thin white stripes of the tapers that surround it stand out clear. The people, chiefly women and boys, scuffle and whisper subduedly as they kneel in rows. The black-walled, black-roofed church seems to enclose and compress them as if in some vast and lugubrious tomb; and their mutterings sound like the gibbering of ghosts. The sermon begins; a voice alone, full of inflexion, passion, forcible cadences, speaking out of the darkness. Though the preacher is invisible, the mind unconsciously and perforce pictures the action that must accompany this strong Italian rhetoric. The voice holds the church; and there is silence in the congregation except for the dull thud of the padded doors as some new-comers arrive. The sermon is not long; only a few rapid passages, and then comes the close. The shuffling and whispering are resumed; and the sacristans begin to light the candles. Through the darkness the little yellow tips of fire move noiselessly, touching the tall wax tapers before each altar, and down the nave, and round the cenotaph in the centre. Presently the church is faintly illuminated by these warm yellow stars, that waver to and fro in the gloom, but do not overcome it. There is a short hush of silent prayer; then the congregation rises and shuffles out down the steps of the church on to the broad pavement of the Zattere.

The sun has set, the wind died away; the air is mild and clear; the sky in the west is mellowed to a wonderful enamel of molten blue and green and daffodil; and no stars are shining yet. The crowd disappears rapidly; the boys rush



off with shouts; the men follow in twos or threes with long swinging step and conscious manly movement; the women linked arm in arm, go clattering down the narrow street on their noisy pattens.

On All Souls' Day it is the custom to visit the graves of relations and friends in that grim cemetery of San Michele, whose high brick wall you pass on the way to Murano or Torcello. The church itself is a lovely specimen of Lombardi work with delicate bas-reliefs in Istrian stone upon the little pentagonal Cappella Emiliana adjoining it. But there is something terrible and sinister in the cemetery itself, where the dead lie buried in the ooze of the lagoon-island. On this day the Venetians carry wreaths to lay on the graves. The wealthier have garlands made of real flowers, but, for the most part, these wreaths are twined out of Venetian beads—red and blue, Madonna's colours, for the women; or black and white for the men, who have no universal patron in the heavens.

There is one old custom connected with this festival of the dead which still survives in Venice, and recalls a Latin, or even an earlier superstition. The pious man in Ovid's "Fasti" rises at midnight to fling black beans behind his shoulder. Nine times he flung his beans, and then the ghost was laid. The Venetian does not fling away his beans; he eats them. In Venice this custom of eating beans through the octave of All Souls' is extremely ancient. The monks of every cloister in the city used to make a gratuitous distribution of beans on All Souls' Day to any of the poor who chose to

come for them. A huge caldron was placed in the middle of the courtyard and the food ladled out to the crowd. The gondoliers did not come with the rest, but had their portion sent down to them at their ferries. This grace was granted to them in consideration of the fact that all the year round they rowed the brothers across the canals for nothing. Indeed, though the custom is almost extinct, they still do so; and you may sometimes see a brown-cowled friar crossing a ferry with no other payment than a pinch of snuff or a benediction. As the Venetians grew more wealthy true beans became distasteful to the palates of the luxurious, who were yet unwilling to break through the custom of eating them on All Souls' Day. The pastry cooks saw their opportunity, and invented a small round puff, coloured blue or red or yellow, and hollow inside; these they called *fave*, or beans; and these are to be seen at this time of the year in all the bakers' windows. If a man should happen to be courting at this season it is customary for him to make a present of a boxful of these *fave* to his lady. But the pious mind has never been quite at ease under the gastronomic deception; and so, though you may hate beans and keep your hands from them as scrupulously as any pupil of Pythagoras,—should your cook chance to be a good Catholic you will assuredly, about the month of November, have beans set before you for dinner in Venice.

## CANALS, WELLS AND SQUARES

JULIA CARTWRIGHT

IT would be impossible to conceive any street in the world more stately or more full of exquisite and varied loveliness than this of the Grand Canal as it was in the days of Venetian greatness. Even to-day we feel, in Mr. Ruskin's words, how utterly impossible it is for any man "unless on terms of work like Albert Dürer's to express adequately the mere contents of architectural beauty in any general view on the Grand Canal." Its beautiful sweep and fascinating surroundings always attract artists who, like Mr. Ruskin himself, can overcome the difficulties of any subject by the force of his love, as he has sufficiently proved in his own Venetian drawings. But it is not only on the Canalazzo that we must seek for the examples of the architectural wealth in which Venice abounds. Some of the finest palaces, as well as of some of the choicest specimens of Lombardi and Sansovino's art, are to be found in narrow bye-canals or in obscure *campi* in the less visited quarters.

Sometimes, as in the little canals of St. Bernado or the Campo S. Stefano, you have four or five palaces with richly worked doorways and windows close together; elsewhere you come upon a Gothic portal upon which the Massegne or the Buoni have lavished all the luxuriance of their wonderful invention. The beautiful gabled relief of Madonnas and saints on the Bridge of Paradise will be familiar to most of us,

and there is a door with an angel raising his hand in blessing out near S. Margherita that is worth remembering. Some of the older houses, where fragments of Byzantine work remain, have crosses let in between the windows or emblems of the four Evangelists in the spandrels of the arches. A wall in the little Campiello S. Angaran still retains the medallion of a Byzantine Cæsar of the Ninth Century, and on the Corte Sabbionera, close to the favourite Teatro Malibran, is a quaint horseshoe arch, patterned over with plants and animals, curious by reason of its Arabic form, and still more interesting as having belonged to the house in which Marco Polo was born.

It is no uncommon thing to stumble upon a row of Byzantine windows in a dilapidated palace inhabited by five or six of the poorest families, and even to see clothes hung out to dry on the parapet of a balcony ornamented with delicate flower-work, cornices and sculptured dragons or birds. A few years ago there was a balcony on a palace in a narrow lane somewhere near the Shrine of the Seave, traditionally ascribed to Sansovino, and adorned with the most exquisite heads of fauns and satyrs, with a character and expression of its own. Let no one seek to find it there, for, like so many other rare things in Venice, it has vanished; and the best hope we can cherish is that it may be one of those rescued from destruction by the care of Mr. J. C. Robinson, and preserved at South Kensington or Birmingham.

Many of the dark and dirty courtyards at the back of these old palaces are well worth visiting for the sake of the



S. MARIA DELLA MISERICORDA: DOCK



ancient staircases and wells they contain. Some of the staircases are open to the sky, and are supported by Gothic arches and twisted pillars, others are in the style of the late Renaissance, ornamented with white marble statues that still throw long lines of light into the water below. Strangers are sure to be shown the lovely spiral staircases of Palazzo Minelli, enclosed in a turret, in the dark little Corte del Maltese, which in form so closely resembles the Tower of Pisa, and that other scarcely less picturesque at the corner of the house where Goldoni was born.

No less interesting are the old wells, *bocche* and *cinte di pozzi*, which you find in every *campo* and in almost every courtyard of Venice. Next to the windows, balconies, doorways, and tombs, these were the most favourite subjects on which the Venetian sculptors lavished their skill, and those still remaining are shaped and adorned with infinite variety. They are so beautiful in themselves, and so closely connected with the history of Venice, that they have always seemed to me deserving of greater attention than has been usually paid them.

From the earliest times the supply of water received the especial attention of the State, and there are said to be no less than two thousand public cisterns in Venice at the present time. In the year 1130 the Paduans, who were then at war with Venice, tried to dam up the Brenta, and thus cut off the chief water-supply of Venice. The alarm which this step excited led to the opening of a number of new wells in the city, and several of those which still exist date back to that



period. Some are even older, and probably belong to the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries. These are generally made of Greek marble, while later ones are of the white Istrian stone so common in Venice, or else of red Verona marble. A complete study of these wells would include the whole history of Venetian sculpture, which we find reflected in all its different phases in the specimens to be found at Venice and its neighbouring islands. At Torcello and Murano and in some parts of Venice we may still see wells of Byzantine date, carved with Greek crosses and stars and peacocks, with interlaced circles and other patterns delicately worked in the flat relief common in pavements and tombs of this epoch in Ravenna. Next we have the Gothic wells of which splendid specimens are to be seen in the Corte Bressana, amongst other places. The earlier of these are shaped like the huge capital of a pillar, and are severe and simple in design, while others are enriched with all the luxuriant foliage and variety of heads, lions, griffins and birds, in which the later Venetian sculptors delighted. Finally, there are the wells which belong, by their form and decoration, to the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries. The more elaborate specimens of this period are profusely adorned with flowers and leaves, medallions, rosettes, bead and scroll-work—in short, with every kind of Renaissance ornament. The finest examples of this numerous and well-preserved class are the octagonal bronze wells in the court of the Ducal Palace, designed after Vittoria's style by Alberghetti of Ferrara and Niccolo de Conti in the middle of the Sixteenth Century

## CANALS, WELLS, SQUARES 233

It would be unjust to the dry land if we did not acknowledge the picturesqueness of the *calle* where the high roofs shut out all but the narrowest strip of blue sky, and where swinging shutters and jutting balconies and window-sills with crimson and yellow stuffs hanging over them, and little shrines of Virgin and saints, each with their lamp burning, and shops and wares and laces are crowded together in the most inextricable confusion.

Out of these crooked and bewildering streets, with their bright medley of form and colour, we emerge on to the *campi*, or squares, in front of the churches, to which they were originally attached as burial-grounds. Each of these squares is now a little centre of life, and has its *farmacia* and grocery and fruiterer's shop, perhaps a *palazzo* with the upper stories to let, sometimes a tree or two swaying leafy boughs against the balconies. Each has its well generally raised on steps, round which the gossips of the place collect and where you may glean many a characteristic and amusing incident of Venetian life. Every morning at eight o'clock the iron lid which closes its mouth is unlocked, and then there is a clanking of heels on the stone pavement and a brisk chattering of tongues, as the water-carriers, stout-built peasant maidens from Friuli, each wearing the same high-crowned hat and short skirts, come to fill their copper buckets at the well. Many of the *campi* in front of the well-known churches have furnished subjects to our painters, such as the square in front of San Giovanni e Paolo, the burial-place of the Doges, which is further adorned by the

presence of Colleoni's glorious statue and that masterpiece of the Lombard's art, the *Scuola di San Marco*. Another favourite bit is the little Campiello di San Rocco with the back of the church of the Frari towering over the roofs and some trefoil windows in a house on the right which formed the subject of one of Prout's pictures.

Less familiar, but quite as well worth knowing, is the still grassy square in front of the remote church of the Madonna dell' Orto, where the tall Gothic windows and traceries of red and white marble with which Bartolommeo Buoni adorned that fair shrine look down on the sunny turf. This is the very edge of the lagoon. A few steps further on you have a splendid view over the wide expanse from the creek or *Sacca della Misericorda*.

## SUMMER IN VENICE

LINDA VILLARI

VENICE in Summer! To most ears the words seems synonymous with much heat, bad odours, and mosquitoes innumerable. These are there, it is true, yet may all be escaped. Venice is the one city of Italy where summer days need not be spent in darkened rooms, where heat may be defied, and evening glories and the cool salt breath of the lagoon bring delights far outweighing the chance discomfort of fervid noons. But to enjoy your summer is essential to live in private lodgings. Then, and then only, you feel the full charm of Venetian magic. No tourist-talk breaks the spell, no dinner-bell curtails your study of sea and sky, and every door can be left open to invite full draughts of air.

Instead of the irksome glare and chatter of a crowded *table d'hôte*, you have the choice of quiet meals in your own dim dining-room, of frugal repasts beneath the vines of the artist-haunted restaurant, on the Zattere beside the Giudecca Canal, or of set dinners at the Lido Baths, where courses of changing effects on waves and sky, and distant strip of tree-fringed coast feast your eyes better than the too-dilatory dishes nourish your body.

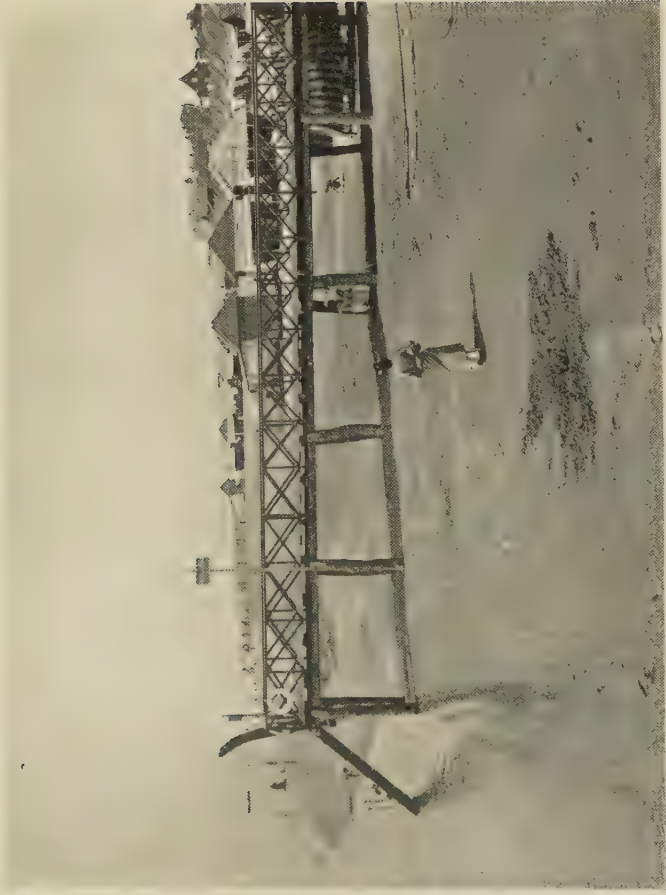
As for the dreaded mosquitoes, their numbers are few until the hungry swallows have flown, and they are too well en-

gaged on fresh English blood in the hotels near the Salute and along the Riva to make any raids on private houses.

The ideal Venetian lodging should be, of course, in some palace of historic name, with carven balconies, painted arches, and lofty echoing halls. Such lodgings, however, are seldom to be found, and you usually have to content yourself with more plebeian surroundings, and satisfy your soul with local colour of a humbler sort.

Fate led us to San Samuele, and gave us a modest dwelling, shrinking back on a little *campo* on the Grand Canal, placed between Ca'Malipiero and Ca'Grassi, opposite the massive Rezzonico Palace, for which even Renaissance-hating Mr. Ruskin can find no word of blame. Thus we commanded a space of the great highway, and had a perfect Venetian view across the water, down winding Rio San Barnaba, with its bridge and brown tower, tall grey campanile, irregular patches of roof, and fan-shaped chimneys. The vine-trellis, shading our *traghetto*, or gondola-stand, was a pleasant object in the foreground. There was a sculptured well in the Campo beside us, and the belfry of St. Samuel was built into our house, and bounded our scrap of roof-terrace to the rear. Viewed by moonlight from the canal, it seemed a fit scene for operatic love and crime.

Knowing that every inch of Venetian ground, every street and square and bridge, every *Campo* and *Rio* and *Calle*, *Salizzata* and *Fondamenta*, has some historic associations to compare with those of the arched and pillared palaces that are better known to fame, we made haste to inquire into the



THE LIDO BATHS





past of our own humble *campo*, and the humbler network of devious lanes in its rear. Putting aside one or two ugly tales of crime, the following were all the particulars we were able to glean:

The Church of San Samuele, only open for early morning service, pending repairs, dates from the beginning of the Eleventh Century; but, having been twice partly destroyed by fire, was almost entirely rebuilt in the Seventeenth Century, and our noisy belfry is probably all that remains of the original structure. The church contains no works of art worthy of mention, but the parish is rich in artistic memories.

Titian once possessed a studio hard by in the house of the architect Bartolommeo Buono. The sculptors Giulio, Tullio and Antonio Lombardo lived at San Samuele, and it was the birthplace of Madesta da Pozzo, a learned lady of much repute in the Sixteenth Century. Paolo Veronese spent his last years in the Casa Zecchini, and died there in 1588 of a fever caught by taking part in a grand Easter procession. His sons and grandsons, painters all, continued to live there; and in their days the house was enriched by many of the elder Caliari's works. Girolamo Campagna, too, had once plied his chisel and fused his bronze in the same building. Several artists of lesser note, like Giralomo Pilotti, the follower of Palma Vecchio, Ridolfi, the painter and biographer of painters, and Pietro Literi, whose profitable brush enabled him to build himself the palace now known as Casa Morolin, also lived within sound of our bells. Here at San Samuele, the notorious adventurer, Giacomo Casanova,

first opened his audacious eyes, and may have passed his early years in squabbling on the *campo* with other ragamuffins, hooking gondolas for a copper coin, and diving in the canal on summer nights, much after the manner of the Nineteenth Century imps, whose shrill voices made a frequent treble to the deeper tones of our gondoliers, and here, in later and comparatively respectable days, when employed as a spy of the Inquisition, he may perhaps have penned the famous report in which he denounced the possession of many impious and prohibited works. The list is curious, and includes the works of Voltaire and Rousseau, the *Esprit* of Helvetius, the *Belisarius* of Marmontel, sundry productions of Crébillon and Diderot, the *De Rerum Natura* of Lucretius, Bolingbroke's *Examination*, the writings of Machiavelli, Spinoza, etc. The pious criticisms of the white-washed rogue were somewhat sweeping in their range. His white-wash, however, had rubbed off by the time he composed his scandalous memoirs and miraculous escapes from the *Piombi*, in the Bohemian castle of his last patron.

Being flanked and faced by patrician abodes, our modest *campo* has had its share of the festive shows for which Venice has at all times been celebrated; but its noblest pageant must have been that of the wedding of Lucrezia Contarini and Jacopo, son of the Doge Francesco Foscari, on Sunday, the 29th of January, 1441. Then a crowd of patrician guests in festal attire, and mounted on gaily caparisoned steeds, rode to the *campo* from all quarters of the town, and crossed the canal to San Barnaba on a bridge of

boats erected for the occasion. The Serenissimo went in person to meet the bride at High Mass in that brown-towered church; and, later an open-air sermon was preached on the *campo* without to a great concourse of hearers, *tanti zenti lomeni e puovola che no se podeva andar in alcun luogo*—so many nobles and townsfolk that there was no room to stir. And in the evening, the Bucintoro brought a hundred and fifty noble dames to lead the bride, escorted by a fleet of skiffs and gondolas to her new home in the Ducal Palace, where the wedding festivities were prolonged far into the night. Fortunately, no astrologer seems to have dimmed the brightness of the day by foretelling how soon this joy was to be turned into mourning; the gay young bridegroom made the victim of relentless persecution, and his splendid father stripped of his state, and left to die of sheer misery in his family palace at the turn of the Canal! Foscari's successor, Doge Malipiero, also abode at San Samuele, and the sculptured archway of his palace in the *Salizzada* frames a dainty garden scene with fountain and statues in the background.

Never live near a *traghetto*, say old Venetians: and we might add, never beside a well or in front of a belfry. But although at the cost of quiet, our position had undoubted advantages for insight into local manners and customs. Daily at 5 A. M. St. Samuel's iron voice reminded us that we were in Venice, its vibrations shaking us in our beds. An hour later, the clang of copper pails, clinking of chains and shrill clatter of housewives' tongues announced the opening of the well. Soon the ringers were again at work in our belfry, the pierc-

ing whistles of the "tram" steamers, most disturbing of modern utilities, began to resound from the canal, and the every day business of Venice was fairly begun.

As for the gondoliers of our *traghetto*, they were never quiet: all hours seemed alike to them. Like the poet's hackneyed brook, they too ran on forever. They seldom ceased quarrelling with one another excepting to wage a fiercer war of words with their brethren of the opposite stand. Hailstorms of invective were always flying back and forth across the water. The only truce to the undying feud was when both sides joined in volleys of bad language against their common foes, the penny steamers that have so wofully diminished their gains. One day, one of these steamers chanced to foul the nearest landing-stage, and instantly the air was rent by the derisive howls of all the gondoliers within sight.

But if our noisy crew had little work, neither did they take much repose. Towards 11 P. M. there would be a promising lull in their disputes: they would indulge in prolonged and prodigious yawns. Custom was growing scarce, there were fewer footsteps on the pavement, fewer cries of "Poppi"—the signal for hailing a gondola to ferry you over the canal—came to summon them to their oars. Surely they would slumber at last, and allow silence to reign in our *campo*! Not at all! Within half an hour they were livelier than ever—all fatigue had evaporated in yawns, and they had so much spare energy that they were driven to vent it in sudden bursts of stentorian song, and thus excite the emulation of the San Barnaba rivals. Luckily the air of Venice is soothing to new-

comers, so we learnt the art of sleeping through the din, and it was difficult to wake at any hour without hearing it going on almost as briskly as before. The only tranquil time was just towards daybreak. A Venetian dawn in July is well worth the cost of a sleepless night, and its clear-eyed frankness as beautiful in its way as the mysterious fantasies played by moonlight on walls and water. Naturally here at San Samuele, midway up the Grand Canal, you miss the splendour of sunrise on the sea to be enjoyed from the Riva; but lack of horizon is almost balanced by the added suggestiveness of effects within the narrower range of vision. For instance, this is what we saw during the small hours of a July morning. First, the soft twilight that had never been gloom at any period of the brief night, gradually paled to a faint whiteness in which the slender, grey, angel-topped campanile down our favourite opening by the Rezzonico walls seemed to lose all substance and become a cloud structure—a mere film instead of a pile of stones. The sturdy brown tower of San Barnaba wore a deeper, warmer tint as the light grew and the stars died out. A few tiny cloudlets began to dapple the clear zenith, slowly expanded and were slowly suffused by a delicate flush that presently deepened to a vivid rose, streaked with grey and backed by darker wool-packs. By this time the swallows were on the wing, circling swiftly in the air, and emitting their sharp sweet note. Pigeons, too, were flitting down from cornice and house top, with much velvety flutter and melodious whirr. Sparrows, pert and well-plumed, darted this way and that, and hopped

lightly about the deserted pavement. One or two boats appeared on the canal: the eyes of Venice were beginning to open for the day. Soon a great barge lumbers past laden with fresh water from the mainland. It is so full that a bare few inches of woodwork save the "sweet water" within from mingling with the brakish element without. How unkempt and sleepy-eyed are the red-capped bargees so patiently trudging the length of their craft with shoulders hard-pressed to their punting poles.

Theirs is no easy trade! With favourable wind and tide they have had at least an eight hours' sail! With wind and tide against them, it is sometimes a two days' journey. Yet this cargo of water only brings them five francs. Having reached its destination, the barge is quickly tackled by a busy little engine, which, with much noise and fuss, distributes its contents into smaller boats, that in their turn fill the public wells by means of far-reaching hose.

The sky was still bright with the freshness of early morn, there were blue spaces still mottled with rose, but the tenderly blushing cloudlets had gone, just as the joyous smiles of infancy vanish in the gravity of manhood. Storm clouds were now thickening over the lagoon to the south, and although unseen from our San Samuele windows, they had sent their messengers before them. Dark brownish masses began to encroach on the azure overhead, and this was already touched here and there by the tiny brush-strokes of the wind. Morning was full-blown now, and a cool breeze at last brought sleep to nerve us for the coming heat of the day.

## NIGHT IN VENICE

JOHN ADDINGTON SYMONDS

NIGHT in Venice! Night is nowhere else so wonderful, unless it be in winter among the high Alps. But the nights of Venice and the nights of the mountains are too different in kind to be compared.

There is the ever-recurring miracle of the full moon rising before day is dead, behind San Giorgio, spreading a path of gold on the lagoon which black boats traverse with the glow-worm lamp upon their prow; ascending the cloudless sky and silvering the domes of the Salute; pouring vitreous sheen upon the red lights of the Piazzetta; flooding the Grand Canal, and lifting the Rialto higher in ethereal whiteness; piercing but penetrating not the murky labyrinth of *rio* linked with *rio*, through which we wind in light and shadow, to reach once more the level glories, and the luminous expanse of heaven beyond the Misericordia.

This is the melodrama of Venetian moonlight; and if a single impression of the night has to be retained from one visit to Venice, those are fortunate who chance upon a full moon of fair weather. Yet I know not whether some quieter and soberer effects are not more thrilling. To-night, for example, the waning moon will rise late through veils of sirocco. Over the bridges of San Cristoforo and San Gregorio, through the deserted Calle di Mezzo, my friend and



I walk in darkness, pass the marble basements of the Salute, and push our way along its Riva to the point of the Dogana. We are at sea alone, between the Canalozzo and the Giudecca. A moist wind ruffles the water and cools our foreheads. It is so dark that we can only see San Giorgio by the light reflected on it from the Piazzetta. The same light climbs the Campanile of St. Mark, and shows the golden angel in a mystery of gloom. The only noise that reaches us is a confused hum from the Piazza. Sitting and musing there, the blackness of the water whispers in our ears a tale of death. And now we hear a splash of oars, and gliding through the darkness comes a single boat. One man leaps upon the landing-place without a word and disappears. There is another wrapped in a military cloak asleep. I see his face beneath me, pale and quiet. The *barcaruolo* turns the point in silence. From the darkness they came; into the darkness they have gone. It is only an ordinary incident of coast-guard service. But the spirit of the night has made a poem of it.

Even tempestuous and rainy weather, though melancholy enough, is never sordid here. There is no noise from carriage traffic, and the sea-wind preserves the purity and transparency of the atmosphere. It had been raining all day, but at evening came a partial clearing. I went down to the Molo, where the large reach of the lagoon was all moon-silvered, and San Giorgio Maggiore dark against the bluish sky, and Santa Maria della Salute domed with moon-irradiated pearl, and the wet slabs of the Riva shimmering in



ISLAND OF S. GIORGIO MAGGIORE



moonlight, the whole misty sky, with its clouds and stellar spaces, drenched in moonlight, nothing but moonlight sensible except the tawny flare of gas-lamps and the orange lights of gondolas afloat upon the waters. On such a night the very spirit of Venice is abroad. We feel why she is called Bride of the Sea.

Take yet another night. There had been a representation of Verdi's *Forza del Destino* at the Teatro Malibran. After midnight we walked homeward through the Merceria, crossed the Piazza, and dived into the narrow *calle* which leads to the *traghetto* of the Salute. It was a warm, moist, starless night, and there seemed no air to breathe in those narrow alleys. The gondolier was half asleep. Eustace called him as we jumped into his boat, and rang our *soldi* on the gunwale. Then he arose and turned the *ferro* round, and stood across towards the Salute. Silently, insensibly, from the oppression of confinement in the airless streets to the liberty and immensity of the water and the night we passed. It was but two minutes ere we touched the shore and said good-night, and went our way and left the ferryman. But in that brief passage he had opened our souls to everlasting things,—the freshness, and the darkness, and the kindness of the brooding, all-enfolding night above the sea.

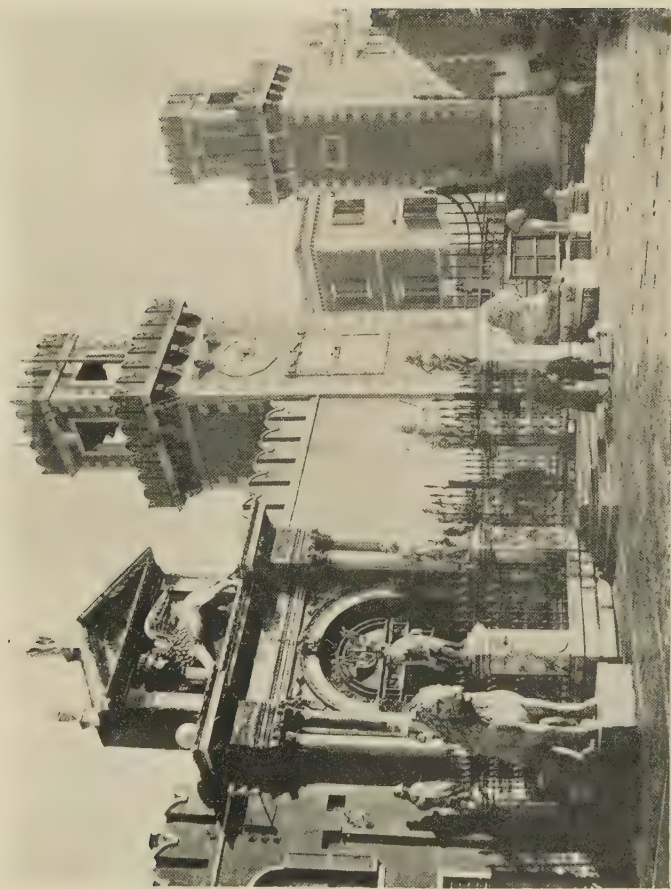
## THE ARSENAL

CHARLES YRIARTE

THE Arsenal of Venice, so strong and formidable considering the date of its construction, was the natural outgrowth to that spirit of commerce and genius for barter. It was also a powerful auxiliary to the ambition of the Venetians; they had wished to make their sovereignty over the Adriatic sure; they were therefore bound to be ready at any moment to defend their pretensions, by sending against those who would dispute their claim a fleet strong enough to compensate for the weakness of their claim.

The Sieur de Saint-Didier, author of *La Ville et la République de Venise*, and an eye-witness of all that he relates, says that the arsenal gives the best idea of the power of Venice, and that it is the admiration of all strangers and "the foundation of the whole power of the State."

The Turks, who were the constant and powerful enemies of the Republic and who often brought her within an ace of destruction, always looked with envious eyes upon this establishment then unrivalled throughout the world; and when the Grand Viziers received the Venetian ambassadors, they never tired of asking for details regarding its organisation, resources and strength. Visitors to Venice would hurry to the arsenal to see its wonderful plan and colossal development; it embodied the moral strength of Venice, the symbol of her



THE ARSENAL





power, the source of her wealth; here you could lay your finger on the tremendous springs of her military machinery and realise the inexhaustible resources of a nation which had given all its energies to the construction and maintenance of a fleet greatly disproportionate to its territory, and whose supremacy over the waters embraced all the coasts of the Archipelago.

Of all modern nations the Venetians were the first to build strong vessels; even as early as the time of the Crusades, they undertook the transportation of French armies; and they had not merely to carry the troops but to provide escort and defend them at need. The heavy galleys had seventy-five feet of keel and the light ones were a hundred and thirty-five feet long; the *coques*, light vessels especially used for transport service, could carry as many as a thousand men-at-arms with their stores; the *galeasses*, which were rowed like galleys, had cannon-proof prows and were armed with fifty pieces of artillery of the highest known calibre; sixteen hundred soldiers could easily fight on board one of them. When such masses appeared on the scene of battle, their attack was irresistible and gained the victory. For more than a century, rival nations were unable to procure means of action powerful enough to oppose these Venetian warships; but, naturally enough, the Genoese, who were great navigators and, like the Spaniards and Turks, redoubtable enemies, endeavoured, in their turn, to arm ships powerful enough to sustain a contest and at last they succeeded. Thenceforward there was a continual development of

methods of warfare, successive enlargements of the arsenal, and great improvements resulted from the stimulus arising from the rivalry of other nations. The Venetians remained the superiors in one thing,—their artillery, and in every naval battle that they won, it is said that the fate of the day was due to the excellent marksmanship of the Venetian gunners. All their ships, even the lightest of them, were armed with cannon; the little galleys, so alert and useful in attack and which could enter the creeks of the bay, could also resist the shocks of the enemy, thanks to the fifteen pieces of artillery with which they were armed.

At first the arsenal was only a dockyard for the construction of merchant ships and galleys; it stood on the site of the ancient island Gemole or Gemelle (twins), in the eastern part of the town; the place was open for a long time before it was enclosed by walls and organised as a national establishment. Until then dockyards were improvised, wherever space could be found and wherever they were required; thus in 1104 and 1298, fifteen large galleys were put on the stocks, in the place where the Royal Gardens now are, on the very edge of the water. During the Thirteenth Century, the arsenal was firmly established and the Senate devoted all its energies to enlarging it; neighbouring grounds were bought, new docks were dug, and dry-docks and repairing and building docks were added whose names show that they were annexed by degrees. Many a time the ruin of the arsenal was the ambition of the enemy; and incessant watch was kept over it; its square towers at the corners and its fortified

walls were perpetually guarded by picked troops. Once it happened that during a war against the Genoese and Turks, spies or paid emissaries of the enemy tried to set fire to it. In 1428 we hear of the case of a Brabançon, who is said to have been bribed by the Duke of Milan to destroy the establishment; he was condemned to be quartered on the Piazzetta; and his body, tied to the tail of a horse, was dragged along the Riva dei Schiavoni. At the close of the Fifteenth Century, according to a traveller, who has left a descriptive memoir, Venice employed sixteen thousand workmen, caulkers, carpenters and painters, and thirty-six thousand seamen. It was about this time, in 1491, that the Senate created the special magistracy of "*Provveditori al arsenale*."

These magistrates remained in office two years and eight months, and they had to leave their Venetian palaces and live in three houses specially built for them, the names of which—Paradise, Purgatory and Hell—are still preserved. Each one had to be on duty a fortnight in turn, during which time he had to sleep in a special apartment in the ramparts. He kept the keys of the arsenal in his room, made the rounds, and answered with his head for the safety of the place. To these three magistrates was attached a secretary, *il fidelissimo segretario del reggimento*. The arsenal had but one entrance; and the only way of gaining admission, short of scaling the high walls, was by means of a small iron gate that opened on the little *campo*.

Everything concerning ship-building and armament, direction of the works, purchase of wood and iron, organisation of

the workshops, discipline of the workmen, commanding of the troops, training of the seamen, storekeeping, provisioning and contracts was under the *provveditori*. They formed themselves into a committee for testing and examining all the new inventions submitted by their fellow-countrymen or by foreigners. The artillery formed a separate department, under the special management of another magistrate, the *Provveditore all' artiglieria*.

The outward appearance of the arsenal has hardly changed since the middle of the Sixteenth Century, as we learn from a curious engraving by Giacomo Franco, which represents the workmen leaving the yard after receiving their pay, and shows the same architecture and decoration that we see to-day, with, however, one exception: the great lions that ornament the entrance were not there then. These strange granite sentinels which give the building such a singular character, works of antiquity brought from Greece by the conquerors of the Peloponnesus and to which they did not hesitate to claim that their origin, or rather their original use, was to commemorate the famous Battle of Marathon, were not placed on their pedestals until the Seventeenth Century. The learned authors of the famous compilation *Venice et ses Lagunes*, say that one of the lions stood on the Lep sina road from Athens to Eleusis, and that the other, the one that is sitting, was at the Piræus. The following quotation leaves no doubt regarding the Venetians' seizure of these two trophies: "The gate is now called Porto Draco, or Lion Gate, on account of a colossal marble lion that was

placed on a large pedestal near the mouth of the harbour. It was ten feet high, sitting on his haunches and looking towards the South. As its mouth was pierced it is thought that it was originally a fountain. In 1687 this lion was brought to Venice by the Venetians and placed at the entrance of the arsenal of the city."

The workmen were a picked body, and the Republic counted so much on their fidelity that the guard of the Grand Council and Senate was entrusted to them. They were soldiers as well as artisans, united under military organisation and brigaded and inspected in their work by the same men who commanded them as officers; and on many occasions this body of ten thousand—sometimes as many as sixteen thousand—men, was the secret guarantee of the internal safety of the Venetian government.

Side by side with the *provveditore* and subordinate to him was the admiral whose title was one of courtesy rather than function for he was an artisan; however, he was an artisan of great skill and of high intelligence, and he was given the greatest authority. He superintended the works and had direction over the building-yards, and enjoyed many much-envied privileges. On ceremonial occasions, he wore a state costume that gave him almost the appearance of a noble: his robe was of red satin over which was a vestment that fell to the knees and on his head he wore a violet damask cap ornamented with a gold cord and large tassels.

At great public festivals and when the Doge, the Senate or visiting sovereigns paid a visit to the arsenal, the admiral

occupied the place of honour, and always conducted the distinguished visitors to the docks which were his special domain. On the day of the *Sensa*, when the Doge, accompanied by the Council and the ambassadors, went with great pomp on board the Bucentaur, to wed the Adriatic, the admiral served as pilot. He was held responsible for bringing the Signory back safely to shore, and had the power, if the weather was threatening, of commanding that they remain in the lagoons without venturing into more dangerous waters.

The arsenal comprised three divisions: for ship-building, small arms and artillery. The Venetians surpassed all people of their day in construction and this superiority was attributed to two causes: the skill of the workmen and the quality of the timber they used. They adopted the plan of placing the administration of the forests under the naval department, and all other purposes for which timber is used, such as the building of houses, fuel, etc., were made subordinate. Timber was bought in the province of Treviso, in Friuli, in Carniola, in Istria and Dalmatia; but these provinces did not supply enough and they had to go to Albania and Germany as well. The timber, after being measured and stamped, was cut into solid beams and floated in the Adriatic near the Lido, where it was kept seasoning for ten years before it was used.

The different pieces of which a galley was constructed were prepared in the workshops ready to be put together, and the skill was such in the arsenal that, on the day that King Henry III. of France visited the arsenal (1574), while he

was attending a banquet in the Great Hall in two hours a galley was put together and launched. It goes without saying that this was a prodigious feat, and that the governors would scarcely have entrusted the life of the Doge in it; but it was a means of demonstrating the powerful means of execution that they possessed. In times of political crises the activity here baffles imagination, and when the famous League was crowned by the victory of Lepanto, every morning for five successive days a new galley left the arsenal. To give an idea of the means employed to secure this degree of efficiency let us take one authentic detail: the State laid a permanent requisition on all crops of hemp grown upon its territories, and opened special storehouses for its sale, to which all purchasers were compelled to go to buy what they needed, at a price regulated by law, after the government had appropriated sufficient for its own needs. Hence arose the superior quality of the Venetian cordage over that of any other navy.

The armoury included the arming of the galleys, the manufacture, preservation and repairing of small arms, and, as in our modern arsenals, supplying the troops.

The artillery comprised the foundries, the training-school and parks for the gunners,—all under the superintendence of the *provveditore*. In the Sixteenth Century, the foundries were under the direction of the famous brothers Alberghetti, who formed a regular school of cannon-foundry; artists like these impressed their own stamp on every piece that went forth, and thus it is that whenever one finds a gun of Venetian make in any of the artillery museums and collec-



tions in Europe, it is almost always a masterpiece, not only of casting but of design. In addition to these branches, there was a superintendent of military machines who was required to keep himself informed regarding all the inventions belonging to warfare.

## THE DOGE

WILLIAM CAREW HAZLITT

THE first duty of the Doge on rising was attendance at the service of Mass, which was performed every morning in his own private chapel; and he afterwards proceeded to apply his attention to his magisterial functions. Accompanied by his notary, he either presided over his own Court at the Palace, or, if no cases of importance happened to be pending there, he was present at the sittings of one of the other tribunals, or of the Common Pleas, which used to be held like that of the Romans and Lombards, under the open sky. We casually glean that, at the beginning of the Thirteenth Century, Friday was the day for presenting petitions and appeals. The Doge undoubtedly possessed the power of reversing all decisions, and it vested in him down to the Twelfth Century to pay as well as appoint the judges of his own Court, to each of whom his Serenity was expected to send annually four casks of wine as a free gift from the vineyards of Comanzo in Chioggia.

From time to time he was in the habit of paying a visit of inspection and inquiry to the several islands which lay around the capital, in order that he might be in a position to check abuses, and to prevent any arbitrary stretches of power on the part of the Tribunes and other subordinate members of the Government. Occasionally it was his practice to

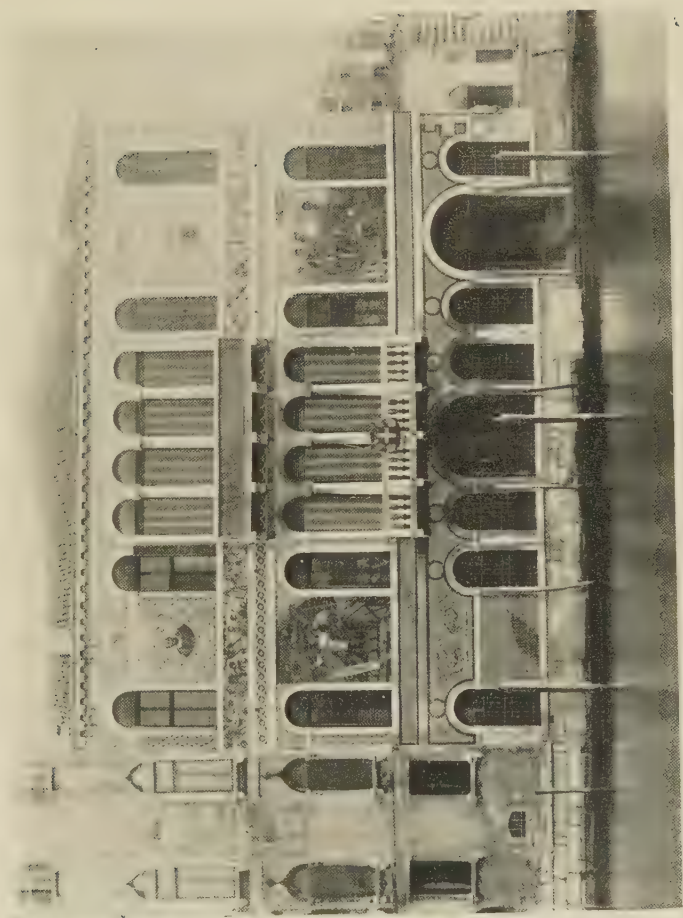
show himself formally in public, and to give his benediction to the assembled people; and when it happened that the fulfilment of his multifarious avocations admitted relaxation and mental repose, his Serenity sometimes took gondola and followed the chase in the woods of Loredò.

Even when the archaic Palace Court had given way to that of the Judges of the Commune, the Doge was held to be the Fountain and Mirror of Justice; and not only was any question, which a Judge might feel himself incompetent to decide, referable in the last resort to the Throne, but in all instances, where a suitor or a prisoner might have reasonable grounds for disputing a judicial award, a right of appeal lay in the same quarter.

Even in primitive times the ducal costume was not without some share of splendour. The Berretta (*beretum*) or Bonnet, of the original type of which we know nothing, but which seems at a tolerably early date to have borne some resemblance to the diadem of the kings of ancient Phrygia, was a high cap of conical form, set with pearls,<sup>1</sup> not unsimilar to the Episcopal mitre and to the headdresses seen on Oriental coins and paintings.

The tradition, which ascribes to the munificence of the contemporary Abbess of San Zaccaria the presentation of a jewelled headdress to the Doge Tradonico (863-864), is suspected of being apocryphal; and assuredly it is so in

<sup>1</sup> The berretta was at last made so weighty that the Doge seldom wore it. Towards the middle of the Fourteenth Century, the Procurators of Saint Mark were charged to remedy this evil.



PALAZZO VENEZIA-MURANO



respect to the details. The Lady Superior may have made an offering of some ornamental bonnet, manufactured in the house, more or less on the model of that then worn by the head of the State; but the earliest tangible vestige of the corno is the mosaic at Saint Mark's attributed to the Eleventh or Twelfth Century, and the apparent prototype of the later berretta, which is mentioned in 1328 as supplied at the cost of the Commune, but does not present itself anterior to that date in any authentic document or passage. The spirit and tone of the Ducal attire strike us as half Lombardic or Frankish, half Oriental; the oblation of the Abbess was in the taste of the age; and it was doubtless simpler even than that delineated on the sculpture above-mentioned. The strict regulations imposed on every department and member of the Executive extended to the ducal bonnet, for, according to the Coronation Oath of 1328, it was to be lodged under the care of the Procurators of Saint Mark, and only to be delivered to the Doge for use on special occasions; and the motive for this caution is to be found in the more sumptuous form and embellishments which the bonnet gradually received, and the apprehension of dishonest practices by minor officials or attendants.

On the exceedingly rare occasion when the Dogressa was also crowned, a second berretta was provided; but after the death of Silvestro Valier in 1700 there was a twofold provision that the consort was not again to receive this honour, and that it was not to be worn by the relict of a deceased Doge.

Underneath it, after a time, the chief magistrate wore a

white linen coif, in order that, as a mark of the peculiarly exalted dignity of his office, his head might remain covered when the bonnet itself was removed. When the Grand Council had been instituted, and the election of the Doge rested with it, it became a practice for the new Serenissimo to doff the berretta in returning thanks for the honour conferred, and on one occasion, when the Doge Morosini was in 1693 appointed captain-general in the Morea, he rose from his place and uncovered, while he signified his acceptance of the trust, and his resolution to serve his country to the best of his power. In the case of high official functionaries the Doge touched hands; but otherwise he at certain public receptions extended his hand to be kissed.

A doublet of red velvet, with straight sleeves tapering toward the wrist, and a high collar, was in part hidden by an outer mantle, sometimes curiously figured, which descended almost to the feet, with a border of gold fringe and a small circular clasp of gold. A sable cape, red stockings and shoes of a somewhat primitive pattern completed his attire; and it transpires in connection with a historical episode of 1071 that the Doge was accustomed out-of-doors to use sandals, probably as a protection against the mire in the public ways in wet weather. In the drawing, from which the present description is borrowed, the hands are not gloved.

The Bucentaur is cited, as if it were hardly then a novelty, in the Coronation Oath of 1328, and is there said to be one of the accessories furnished by the State as a means of augmenting the ducal dignity. No particulars are given, and



possibly, if the vessel already existed, none were thought to be requisite. Nor is any help forthcoming toward a solution of the name, which some have connected with the Virgilian *Centaurus*, of which the figure of a centaur may be supposed to have adorned the prow. But in 1205, when the newly elected Doge was to be fetched from his official post at a distance, a feeling of the propriety of some special mark of respect showed itself in the embellishment of the sides of the galley despatched to the Serenissimo with silk taffeta hangings.

John Evelyn visited the Arsenal in 1646, and saw the Bucentaur, of which he speaks as having an ample deck so contrived that the galley slaves are not visible, and on the poop a throne for the Doge, when he went to espouse the Adriatic.

The last State-barge constructed for the use of the Doge was launched in 1729. It was 100 feet in length, 21 in breadth, with an upper and a lower deck, of which the latter was reserved for the oarsmen. At the extremity towards the poop on the superior deck, which was covered, near the raised seat allotted to the Doge, was a small window, through which his Serenity threw the ring, when he wedded the Adriatic in the name of the Republic; and forty-eight others were placed along the sides to enable the company to enjoy the spectacle before and around them. The fittings and furniture of the vessel were luxurious, and it was adorned with symbolical figures, bas-reliefs, and other representations within and without, set off by elaborate gilding.

The lady who published the account of the religious and other festivals of the Republic, Giustina Renier Michiel, scion of two noble and ancient houses, beheld the last Bucintaur, before it was brutally destroyed by the French in conjunction with some Venetian adventurers for the sake of the gilt work.

"Alas!" she writes, "I myself saw Frenchmen and Venetians, full of derision and insult, combine to dismantle the Bucintoro and burn it for the gold upon it. . . It was in the form of a galley, and two hundred feet long (*sic*) with two decks. The first of these was occupied by a hundred and sixty rowers, the handsomest and strongest of the fleet, who sat four men to each oar, and there awaited their orders; forty other sailors completed the crew, the upper deck was divided lengthwise by a partition, pierced with arched doorways, ornamented with gilded figures, and covered with a roof supported by caryatides—the whole surmounted by a canopy of crimson velvet embroidered with gold. Under this were ninety seats, and at the stern a still richer chamber for the Doge's throne, over which drooped the banner of Saint Mark. The prow was double-beaked, and the sides of the vessel were enriched with figures of Justice, Peace, Sea, Land, and other allegories and ornaments."<sup>1</sup>

The yearly marriage of the Adriatic was more immediately and palpably a pageant and a symbol; but it has been rendered apparent that the ceremony involved and denoted a

<sup>1</sup>Howells's *Venetian Life* (1883).

political principle, on which the Republic was prepared, nearly down to the last, to insist at all hazards against all comers. Germany, France, Spain, England, were in turn reminded of the claim which the unique wedding imported, in language which could not be misunderstood.

## TOMBS OF THE DOGES

HIPPOLYTE ADOLPHE TAINE

THE gondola plunges northwards into the deserted lanes. The reflections in the water tremble in the concave arches of the bridges like a rose, white and green branched drapery of silk. We leave the city; it is noon and the sky is of a burning whiteness. Stranded rafts extend their wet and shining logs over the plain of motionless water. Facing us is an island surrounded by walls, the cemetery, that overpowers the fiery whiteness with its own crude whites. Further on, two or three sails flit into the channels; on the horizon, the vaporous chain of mountains traces its fringe of snow on the sky. The toothed prow rises out of the water like a strange fish swimming tail foremost, and its black form pierces and presses on and on through innumerable scintillations of little gilded waves amid the deep silence.

On an open square rises the equestrian statue of Colleoni, the second one that was cast in Italy, a true portrait like that of Gattamelata in Padua, a real portrait of a *condottiere* sitting on his stout war-horse, in his cuirass, with legs wide apart, the bust too short, a coarse face of a soldier who commands and shouts, not at all embellished but taken from life, and full of energy. In front is San Giovanni e Paolo, a



STATUE OF COLLEONI



Gothic church, Italo-Gothic, and consequently gay. The round pillars, the wide and expansive arches and the almost white windows do away with all the funereal and mystic ideas that are suggested by the cathedrals of the North. Like the Campo Santo at Pisa, and Santa Croce at Florence, this church is peopled with tombs: add to them those in the Frari, and you have the mausoleum of the Republic. The majority date from the Fifteenth, or the early part of the Sixteenth Century, the brilliant age of the city, the days when the great men and great actions that had passed away were still of sufficiently recent date for the new rising art to catch their image and express its sincerity. Others show the dawn of that great light; and still others show its decline; and thus, through a row of sepulchres, we can follow the history of human genius from its blossoming, through its virility to its decadence.

In the monument of Doge Morosini, who died in 1382, the pure Gothic style flowers in all its elegance. A flowered arcade festoons its lacework above the dead. On either side rises a charming little turret supported by a small column ornamented with trefoils, embroidered with little figures, bristling with steeples and bell-turrets, a kind of delicate vegetation in which the marble bristles and unfolds like a spiky plant that puts forth its prickles and flowers both together. The Doge sleeps with his hands crossed upon his breast. Here we have real mortuary monuments: an alcove sometimes with its canopy or curtain; a marble bed carved and ornamented like the wooden frame on which the ancient



limbs of the man reposed at night when alive; and inside, the man in his ordinary robes, calm in sleep, confident and pious because he acquitted himself well in life; a true effigy without over emphasis or anguish, one that leaves with the survivors the grave and peaceful image that their memories should retain.

That is the seriousness of the Middle Ages. However, beneath the religious severity we already see the dawn of the feeling for living corporeal forms that is to be the special discovery of the following century. In the mausoleum of the Doge Marco Corner, between the five ogival arcades with trefoil carved work topped with delicate spires, the Virtues, joyous long-robed angels, look at us with spontaneous and striking expressiveness. In this dawn of discovery the artist naïvely risked airs and physiognomies that later masters rejected for the sake of dignity and obedience to rules. In this respect, the Renaissance, which reduced Art to Classic nobility, really lessened it, just as the purists of our Seventeenth Century impoverished the rich language of the Sixteenth.

As we advance, we see some feature of the new art constantly unfolding. In the tomb of Doge Antonio Vernier (d. 1400), the paganism of the Renaissance shows itself in one detail of the ornamentation,—the shell niches. All the rest is still angular, flowery, delicately chiselled and Gothic, the sculpture as well as the architecture. The heads, however, are somewhat heavy and awkward, too short and sometimes carried by a wry neck. Artists copy the real: they

have not yet made a final choice of proportions, they do not know the canon of Greek statuary, they are still plunged in observation and in the imitation of life; but their mistakes are delightful. The Madonna whose neck is bent too much clasps her son with such lively tenderness! There is so much goodness and candour in those rather too round maidens' heads. The Five Virgins in their shell niches have such a penetrating youthful freshness and truth! Nothing touches me so much as these sculptures which mark the close of Mediæval art.

All these works are *inventive*, national, sometimes even *bourgeoises* if you like, but they have an incomparable vitality. The dazzling and overwhelming domination of Classical beauty had by no means come to discipline the enthusiasm of original genuises; there were provincial schools of art that were accommodated to the climate, the country and the whole condition of affairs about them, free as yet from academies and capitals. Nothing in the world comes up to the real originality, the intimate and full sentiment and the entire soul imprinted on a work: then the work is as individual and as rich in shadings as the soul itself. One believes in it; the marble becomes a sort of journal in which are put all the confidences of a human life.

If we take a few steps forward in the course of the age, we notice a gradual diminution in this simplicity and naïveté in art. The mortuary monument changes into one of heroic pomp. Round arcades extend their noble span above the dead. Arabesques gaily run around the polished borders.

Columns stand in rows with blooming acanthus capitals; sometimes they rise in stages one above another, and the Four Orders of architecture reveal their variety for the delight of the eyes. The tomb then becomes a colossal triumphal arch; some tombs have twenty statues of almost life size. The idea of death disappears; the defunct no longer lies awaiting the resurrection and the last day, he sits and looks; he "lives again" in the marble, as one epitaph ambitiously says. Similarly, statues that adorn his memorial are gradually transformed. In the middle of the Fifteenth Century, they are still very frequently stiff and constrained; the legs of the youthful warriors are somewhat slender, like those of Perugino's archangels; they are covered with lion-head boots and leggings in which are mingled reminiscences of feudal armour and admiration of antique costume. Both bodies and heads border on the real; the excellence of the faces consists in their involuntary seriousness, their intense and simple expression, the force of their attitude and their fixed and profound gaze. On the approach of the Sixteenth Century, ease and movement come to them. The draperies twine and fall grandly around robust bodies. The muscles rise and display themselves. The young knights of the Middle Ages are now athletes. The virgins, motionless and hooded in their severe mantles, begin to smile and grow animated. Their Greek robes, creased and falling, leave bare their breasts and the slender form of their charming feet. Leaning forwards, half turned backwards, bending from one hip, standing proudly erect and thoughtful, they reveal beneath

their winding draperies the diversities of the living form; and the eyes follow the harmonious curves of the beautiful human animal that in repose, in motion, and in every attitude has only to live in order to be happy and perfect.

Nowhere are they more beautiful than on the tomb of Doge Vendramini (d. 1470). There art is still simple and in its first blossom; the old gravity still exists in its entirety; but the taste for poetry and the picturesque which is just dawning already suffuses it with its richness and splendour. Under arcades with golden flowers, and in the spaces of a Corinthian colonnade, warriors and women draped after the antique gaze or weep. They are not restless, they do not attempt to attract attention; and their restrained expression is all the stronger for it. It is their entire body, it is their type and their structure, it is their vigorous necks, their ample and magnificent hair, and their direct faces that speak. One woman sadly raises her eyes to Heaven; another, half turning away, utters a cry. You would say they were by Giovanni Bellini. They belong to that strong and limited age when the model, like the artist, reduced to five or six energetic feelings, conveys them through his intact sensibility, and in one effort concentrates complete faculties which later will be deadened by indulgence and wasted on details.

With the Sixteenth Century, all the great passions come to an end. Tombs become great operative machines. That of Doge Pesaro (d. 1669), is nothing but a gigantic court decoration rearing its emphatic pile of luxury. Four negroes clothed in white and kneeling on cushions support the second

tier and their black faces grin above their porters' bodies; between them, as a gross contrast, parades a skeleton. As for the Doge, he throws himself back with the importance of a great lord reproving clowns. Chimeras crouch at his feet, a canopy is over his head, and on both sides groups of statues stand in declamatory or sentimental attitudes. Elsewhere, in the tomb of Doge Valier (d. 1656), we see art abandon bombast for mere prettiness. The mortuary alcove envelops itself in a vast yellow marble curtain figured with flowers and held up by a number of little nude angels as playful as Cupids. The Doge has the dignity of a magistrate; and his wife, frizzled, wrinkled and dressed in flowing materials, delicately holds up her left hand with the air of a dowager. Lower down, a pier-glass Victory crowns the good old man who looks related to Belisarius; and, all around, bas-reliefs show groups of gracious and delicate women with drawing-room manners.

All this is spoiled art, but still it is art; I mean that the sculptor and his contemporaries have a real and individual taste, that they love certain things in their world and their life, that they imitated and embellished them, that their preferences are not an academy affair, a work of education, a bookish pedantry, nor a conventional preference. There is nothing else in our century. By its coldness, insipidity and laboriousness, Canova's tomb, executed according to his own plans, is ridiculous: a great pyramid of white marble occupies the entire field of vision; the door is open, there it is that he desires to rest, like a Pharaoh in his sepulchre. To-

wards the door advances a procession of sentimental figures. Atlas, Eudoras and Cymodoceas, a nude sleeping genius extinguishing his torch, another one sighing with head tenderly bent like Bitaubé's young Joseph. A winged lion weeps despairingly with his snout on his paws and his paws on a book: it would take a college professor twenty minutes to comment on this allegorical drama. Close by, poor Titian has had inflicted upon him a tomb like a portico, scraped and shining like an Empire clock, adorned with four pretty, pensive, spiritualistic women, two poor expressive old men with sharp and salient muscles, and two young winged heads wearing crowns. One would say that these artists are void of any proper impression, that they have nothing to say for themselves, that the human body speaks to them no longer, that they have been reduced to hunt in their portfolios for the assistance of lines, and that their whole talent consists in making up an interesting charade according to the last symbolic and æsthetic text-book. Death is something, however, and it seems well that one should be able to have something of one's own to say about it without a book; but I begin to think that we no longer have any ideas about it any more than we have of any other important matter. We drive it out of our minds as though it were an unwelcome guest: when we follow a funeral, it is only for decency's sake, and we pass the time talking to our neighbour about business or literature. Art lives on great determinations, just as criticism lives on nice distinctions, that is why we are not artists but critics.



The same idea recurs when we look at the paintings. There are some admirable ones in a chapel of the church dedicated to the Holy Rosary. One by Titian is the *Martyrdom of St. Peter of Verona*. Domenichino has repeated the same subject at Bologna; but an ignoble fear disfigures his personages. Titian's are grand, like fighters. What struck him was not grimacing or suffering expression of a convulsed visage but the strong action of a murder, the stretch of a striking arm, the agitated draperies of a running fugitive, the magnificent spring of trees stretching out their sombre branches above blood and armour. Still more vehement is a crucifixion by Tintoret. In this all is movement and disorder; the poetry of light and shadow fills the air with dazzling and lugubrious contrasts. A shaft of yellow light falls across the nude Christ who looks like a glorified corpse. Above him, heads of holy women float in a stream of splendid atmosphere, and the body of the impenitent thief, savage and writhing embosses the sky with its ruddy muscular frame. In that tempest of troubled and intense light, it seems as if the crosses are swaying and the executed men are about to fall; as a climax to the poignant emotion and grandiose disorder, in the background we see under a luminous cloud a heap of resuscitated bodies. The whole of the walls is covered with similar paintings by the same hand. Christ rises to Heaven and around Him great nude angels darting through space are furiously sounding their trumpets. The Virgin is carried off by an impetuous throng of little angels whilst below her the apostles are crying and falling down. On



every side and in every picture light vibrates; there is not an atom of air that does not palpitate, and life is so overflowing that it breathes and swarms in the trees, stones, ground and clouds, in every colour and every form, in the universal fever of inanimate nature.

## WEALTH AND INDUSTRIES OF OLD VENICE

WILLIAM B. SCOTT

IN the midsummer of the city's history—about 1500, we shall say, which is rather later than its meridian—it must have offered as perfect a theatre for the sensuous enjoyment of life as any city in any time has done, and thus it is that the Art in its highest development, in the hands of Titian, Giorgione and Paul Veronese, corresponds with and expresses not an enervated nor a relaxed condition of the mental powers by any means—that comes afterwards—but a life of exertion, all the vital forces strong, sensuous gratification and pleasure being servants, not masters, and success following invariably the clearly-understood motive of self-aggrandisement.

For three centuries before this, war as well as trade had gradually made Venice the richest city in the world. In no Italian war, intestine or foreign, throughout the entire history of the various States of that country, must we look for honour or justice. The leaders were as leaders are now, showing noble qualities of self-devotion, bravery and fidelity; but we speak of the motives and reasons for Italian wars, and those of Venice are conspicuous for being wars of plunder or of destruction, rapacity and jealousy being the motives. The greatest early accession to the wealth of the "City of the Sea" was on the taking of Constantinople by the allied Crusaders



BRONZE HORSES OF ST. MARK'S



in 1206, when the submission of the metropolis, intimated by the crowd of priests and women bearing the cross and appealing to the barons as to brethren, was followed by such excesses and monstrosities of cruelty, that we hesitate to believe in their history; and the value of the pillage seems almost, even at this day, equally incredible. In the palaces of Bucoleon and Blachernæ the accumulations of centuries, collected from all parts of the known world, were seized, and in the churches also—the difference between the creeds of the East and West making sacrilege a virtue. At that time, silks, furs, tapestries, porcelain, glass, and the arts of the finest metal-work, as well as the Fine Arts of painting, enamel, and mosaic, were all Oriental; and the portion that fell to the share of Venice, estimated by Gibbon at a sum about equal to ten years of the then revenue of England, must have contributed largely to make it what it shortly afterwards became—the most skilful of all the cities of the West in certain luxurious manufactures. Villehardouin, quoted in Smedley's able little book, *Sketches of Venetian History*, says: "It is my belief that the plunder of this city exceeded all that had been witnessed since the creation of the world." Gold and silver in every form, vases for every use which the caprice of luxury could suggest, and of more various names than we can hope to translate with accuracy—those now unknown myrrshines, which Pompey had won in his triumphs over Mithridates and Tigranes; gems wrought into festal cups, among which the least precious were framed of turquoise, jasper, or amethyst; jewels which

the affection or the pride of Oriental despots was wont to deck their imperial brides; crowns of solid gold crusted with pearls; rings and *fibulæ* set with fabulous or world-famous diamonds, unnumbered jacinths, emeralds, sapphires, chrysolites and topazes that had been hoarded as treasure against the day of need; and "lastly those matchless carbuncles which, placed afterwards on the high altar of St. Mark, were said to blaze with intrinsic light, and serve as lamps—these are but a sample of the treasures that accrued to Venice; and the historian, in adverting to them, appears conscious that language must fail him in the attempt to convey an adequate impression of their immeasurable extent, their inappreciable cost and their inexhaustible luxury."

Many of the articles from this sack were afterwards to be seen in Venice adorning the altars and reliquaries, and possibly on the *berretta*,<sup>1</sup> and other appliances of the Doge; but the most notable articles transported to the lagoon, and, it is said, almost the only ones whose value depended on their Fine Art, were the Bronze Horses now over the porch of St. Mark. To quote the same authority: "The long catalogue of precious works of Art, ruined by stupid, brutal, and unfeeling ignorance, excites no less astonishment than regret and indignation. Books, the whole literature of the time, never to be replaced; marbles, pictures, statues, obelisks and bronzes; which the magnificence, the pride, the luxury, or

<sup>1</sup> This famous covering of the head of the Venetian State is one of the most interesting appendages of royalty, as we may call it, in European history.

the good taste of her princes had lavished, during nine centuries, upon this their favourite capital, prizes which Egypt, Greece and Rome had supplied, and which had justly rendered Constantinople the wonder of nations, perished indiscriminately beneath the fury of the marauders; and while almost every church throughout Christendom received a large accession to its reliquary from the translated bones of saints and confessors (a catalogue of these disgusting but superhuman valuables falling to the share of Venice is still extant), scarcely one monument of ancient skill and taste was thought worthy of preservation. The Venetians afforded a solitary example in the removal of the four horses of gilt bronze from the hippodrome. Antiquaries appear to hesitate concerning the date or even the native country of these horses; for by some they have been assigned to the Roman time and to the age of Nero; by others, to the Greeks of Chio, at a much earlier period. Though far from deserving a place among the choicest specimens of Art, their possession, if we may trust their most generally received history, has always been much coveted. Augustus, it is said, brought them from Alexandria, after the conquest of Anthony, and erected them on a triumphal arch in Rome; hence they were successively removed by Nero, Domitian, Trajan, and Constantine, to arches of their own; and in each of these positions, it is believed, they were attached to a chariot. Constantine, in the end, transferred them to his new capital."

At this period St. Mark's was built, and, externally, pretty much as it is at present, and the two granite columns had been



placed on the quay of the Piazzetta, also brought from Constantinople at a former time, although as yet they had not received their crowning burdens, the Lion of St. Mark, and the figure of St. Theodore standing on the crocodile. Very shortly after this time, the two square piers, the visitor will also remember, near the corner of the Ducal Palace, were brought from Acre and other plunder of a semi-artistic kind showed that the love of beautiful, or perhaps rather of rare, things, had begun to distinguish the Venetians from all other men employed then in war or trade. These objects, indeed, were rather trophies than refined works, but they remain to us to indicate the taste that appreciated whatever decorated either the city or the person—a taste that assisted to develop the prodigious prosperity of the Republic at the time of its greatest power. The incessant activity and love of adventure abroad united with that love of Art and of pleasure at home. At first the settlers had to fight for the preservation of the soil they built upon, and they never ceased fighting for dominion till the whole earth acknowledged them foremost.

An enumeration of the articles peculiar to that time to the trade of Venice would be curious enough now. The ships of her merchants exchanged from country to country whatever could be converted into money, but they were still more employed in exporting. After the silk manufacture was transplanted from the Bosphorus, it was very soon extended to an infinitely greater amount of produce than it had attained in its original seat, and being interdicted for domestic use to all the citizens or their wives, save magistrates, as

many other luxuries were (a Spartan simplicity for a brief time being maintained), the whole of Christendom was supplied from Venice. A little later sprang up the manufacture of cloths, to which we in England contributed wool before we could use it ourselves; and long prior to its production elsewhere, gilt and stamped leather brought into the Exchange 100,000 ducats a year, as did waxen tapers to a somewhat similar extent, and the liqueurs and poisons so celebrated or so feared. To correct these last, the glass-makers of Murano, the only glass-makers in the world for centuries, fabricated the apocryphal thin drinking-cups that flew to pieces on receiving the deadly potion. Besides this article of doubtful commercial value, these glass-houses began the making of mirrors, as well as vessels of all sorts,—the architect they had assisted since early times,—thus aiding civilisation in Italy in several ways, while the Northern nations lagged behind. And when Germany began the new arts of printing and engraving, Venice, where a trade in stencilled or stamped playing-cards had previously existed, very quickly advanced in front of her, showing equal learning and greater dexterity. During the first age of printing, the number of books produced in Venice exceeds that of all the presses of France and England together; and many of them are besides very perfect specimens of the new art, such as those by the Aldi from 1488, the year in which the elder Aldus settled in the city. The production of such a book as *The Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* alone is enough to place it first in the early history of illustrated typography.

## THE BRIDES OF VENICE

JOHN RUSKIN

THE place where we may best commence our inquiry is one renowned in the history of Venice, the space of ground before the Church of Santa Maria Formosa; a spot which, after the Rialto and St. Mark's Place, ought to possess a peculiar interest in the mind of the traveller, in consequence of its connection with the most touching and true legend of the Brides of Venice. That legend is related at length in every Venetian history, and, finally, has been told by the poet Rogers, in a way which renders it impossible for any one to tell it after him. I have only, therefore, to remind the reader that the capture of the brides took place in the cathedral church, St. Pietro di Castello; and that this of Santa Maria Formosa is connected with the tale, only because it was yearly visited with prayers by the Venetian maidens, on the anniversary of their ancestors' deliverance. For that deliverance, their thanks were to be rendered to the Virgin; and there was no church then dedicated to the Virgin, in Venice, except this.

Neither of the cathedral church, nor of this dedicated to St. Mary the Beautiful, is one stone left upon another. But, from that which has been raised on the site of the latter, we may receive a most important lesson, if first we glance back



GRAND CANAL SHOWING VENDRAMINI: CALERGI PALACE



to the traditional history of the church which has been destroyed.

No more honourable epithet than "traditional" can be attached to what is recorded concerning it, yet I should grieve to lose the legend of its first erection. The Bishop of Uderzo, driven by the Lombards from his bishopric, as he was praying, beheld in a vision the Virgin Mother, who ordered him to found a church in her honour, in the place where he should see a white cloud rest. And when he went out, the white cloud went before him; and on the place where it rested he built a church, and it was called the Church of St. Mary the Beautiful, from the loveliness of the form in which she had appeared in the vision.

The first church stood only for about two centuries. It was rebuilt in 864, and enriched with various relics some fifty years later; relics belonging principally to St. Nicodemus, and much lamented when they and the church were together destroyed by fire in 1105.

It was then rebuilt in "*magnifica forma*," much resembling, according to Corner, the architecture of the chancel of St. Mark.

Thus, by Corner, we are told that this church, resembling St. Mark's, "remained untouched for more than four centuries," until, in 1689, it was thrown down by an earthquake, and restored by the piety of a rich merchant, Turrin Toroni, "*in ornatissima forma*"; and that, for the greater beauty of the renewed church, it had added to it two façades of marble. With this information that of the Padre dell' Oratoria agrees,

only he gives the date of the earlier rebuilding of the church in 1175, and ascribes it to an architect of the name of Barbetta. But Quadri, in his usually accurate little guide, tells us that this Barbetta rebuilt the church in the Fourteenth Century; and that, of the two façades, so much admired by Corner, one is of the Sixteenth Century, and its architect unknown; and the rest of the church is of the Seventeenth, "in the style of Sansovino."

There is no occasion to examine, or endeavour to reconcile, these conflicting accounts. All that is necessary for the reader to know is, that every vestige of the church in which the ceremony took place was destroyed *at least* as early as 1689; and that the ceremony itself, having been abolished in the close of the Fourteenth Century, is only to be conceived as taking place in that more ancient church, resembling St. Mark's, which, even according to Quadri, existed until that period. I would, therefore, endeavour to fix the reader's mind for a moment, on the contrast between the former and latter aspect of this space of ground; the former, when it had its Byzantine church, and its yearly procession of the Doge and the Brides; and the latter, when it has its Renaissance church "in the style of Sansovino," and its yearly honouring is done away.

And, first, let us consider for a little the significance and nobleness of that early custom of the Venetians, which brought about the attack and the rescue of the year 943: that there should be but one marriage day for the nobles of the whole nation, so that all might rejoice together; and that



the sympathy might be full, not only of the families who that year beheld the alliance of their children, and prayed for them in one crowd, weeping before the altar, but of all the families of the State, who saw, in the day which brought happiness to others, the anniversary of their own. Imagine the strong bond of brotherhood thus sanctified among them, and consider also the effect on the minds of the youth of the State; the greater deliberation and openness necessarily given to the contemplation of marriage, to which all the people were solemnly to bear testimony; the more lofty and unselfish tone which it would give to all their thoughts. It was the exact contrary of stolen marriage. It was marriage to which God and man were taken for witnesses, and every eye was invoked for its glance, and every tongue for its prayers.

Later historians have delighted themselves in dwelling on the pageantry of the marriage day itself, but I do not find that they have authority for the splendour of their descriptions. I cannot find a word in the older chronicles about the jewels or dress of the brides, and I believe the ceremony to have been more quiet and homely than is usually supposed. The only sentence which gives colour to the usual accounts of it is one of Sansovino's, in which he says that the magnificent dress of the brides in his day was founded "on ancient custom." "Dressed according to ancient usage in white, and with her hair thrown down upon her shoulders, interwoven with threads of gold." This was when she was first brought out of her chamber to be seen by the guests invited to the

espousals. "And when the form of the espousal has been gone through, she is led, to the sound of pipes and trumpets, and other musical instruments, round the room, *dancing serenely all the time, and bowing herself before the guests*; and so she returns to her chamber: and when other guests have arrived, she again comes forth, and makes the circuit of the chamber. And this is repeated for an hour or somewhat more; and then, accompanied by many ladies who wait for her, she enters a gondola without its felze (canopy), and, seated on a somewhat raised seat covered with carpets, with a great number of gondolas following her, she goes to visit the monasteries and convents, wheresoever she has any relations." However this may have been, the circumstances of the rite were otherwise very simple. Each maiden brought her dowry with her in a small *cassetta*, or chest; they went first to the cathedral, and waited for the youths, who, having come, they heard mass together, and the bishop preached to them and blessed them; and so each bridegroom took his bride and her dowry and bore her home.

It seems that the alarm given by the attack of the pirates put an end to the custom of fixing one day for all marriages: but the main objects of the institution were still attained by the perfect publicity given to the marriages of all the noble families; the bridegroom standing in the Court of the Ducal Palace to receive congratulations on his betrothal, and the whole body of the nobility attending the nuptials, and rejoicing, "as at some personal good fortune; since, by the constitution of the State, they are for ever incorporated together,

as if one and the same family." But the festival of the 2nd of February, after the year 943, seems to have been observed only in memory of the delivery of the brides, and no longer set apart for public nuptials.

There is much difficulty in reconciling the various accounts, or distinguishing the inaccurate ones, of the manner of keeping this memorable festival. Sansovino says that the success of the pursuit of the pirates was owing to the ready help and hard fighting of the men of the district of Sta. Maria Formosa, for the most part trunk-makers; and that they, having been presented after the victory to the Doge and the Senate, were told to ask some favour for their reward. "The good men then said that they desired the Prince, with his wife and the Signory, to visit every year the church of their district on the day of its feast. And the Prince asking them, 'Suppose it should rain?' they answered, 'We will give you hats to cover you; and if you are thirsty, we will give you to drink.' Whence is it that the Vicar, in the name of the people, presents to the Doge, on his visit, two flasks of malvoisie and two oranges; and presents to him two gilded hats, bearing the arms of the Pope, of the Prince, and of the Vicar. And thus was instituted the Feast of the Maries, which was called noble and famous because the people from all round came together to behold it. And it was celebrated in this manner." The account which follows is somewhat prolix; but its substance is, briefly, that twelve maidens were elected, two for each division of the city; and that it was decided by lot which *contrada*, or quarter of the

town, should provide them with dresses. This was done at enormous expense, one *contrada* contending with another; and even the jewels of the treasury of St. Mark being lent for the occasion to the "Maries," as the twelve damsels were called. They, being thus dressed with gold, and silver, and jewels, went in their galley to St. Mark's for the Doge, who joined them with the Signory, and went first to San Pietro di Castello to hear mass on St. Mark's Day, the 31st of January, and to Santa Maria Formosa on the 2nd of February, the intermediate day being spent in passing in procession through the streets of the city, "and sometimes there arose quarrels about the place they should pass through, for every one wanted them to pass by his house."

But whatever doubt attaches to the particular circumstances of its origin, there is none respecting the splendour of the festival itself, as it was celebrated for four centuries afterwards. We find that each *contrada* spent from 800 to 1000 zecchins in the dress of the "Maries" entrusted to it; but I cannot find among how many *contradas* the twelve Maries were divided; it is also to be supposed that most of the accounts given refer to the later periods of the celebration of the festival. In the beginning of the Eleventh Century, the good Doge Pietro Orseolo II. left in his will the third of his entire fortune "per la Festa della Marie"; and, in the Fourteenth Century, so many people came from the rest of Italy to see it, that special police regulations were made for it, and the Council of Ten was twice summoned before it took place. The expense lavished upon it seems to have in-

creased till the year 1379, when all the resources of the Republic were required for the terrible war of Chiozza, and all festivity was for that time put an end to. The issue of the war left the Venetians with neither the power nor the disposition to restore the festival on its ancient scale, and they seem to have been ashamed to exhibit it in reduced splendour. It was entirely abolished.

As if to do away even with its memory, every feature of the surrounding scene which was associated with that festival has been in succeeding ages destroyed. With one solitary exception, there is not a house left in the whole Piazza of Santa Maria Formosa from whose windows the *festa* of the Maries has ever been seen: of the church in which they worshipped, not a stone is left, even the form of the ground and direction of the neighbouring canals are changed; and there is now but one landmark to guide the steps of the traveller to the place where the white cloud rested, and the shrine was built to St. Mary the Beautiful. Yet the spot is still worth his pilgrimage, for he may receive a lesson upon it, though a painful one. Let him first fill his mind with the fair images of the ancient festival, and then seek that landmark, the tower of the modern church, built upon the place where the daughters of Venice knelt yearly with her noblest lords; and let him look at the head that is carved on the base of the tower, still dedicated to St. Mary the Beautiful.

A head,—huge, inhuman, and monstrous,—leering in bestial degradation, too foul to be either pictured or described, or to be beheld for more than an instant; for in that head is

embodied the type of the evil spirit to which Venice was abandoned in the fourth period of her decline; and it is well that we should see and feel the full horror of it on this spot, and know what pestilence it was that came and breathed upon her beauty, until it melted away like the white cloud from the ancient fields of Santa Maria Formosa.

## SEASONS OF VENICE

JULIA CARTWRIGHT

EACH season has its special charm in Venice. Even the winter, which is decidedly the least preferable, is not without its advantages. The climate is decidedly milder than that of Florence or Milan, and if you can secure comfortable quarters and a good stove to warm your room it is possible to spend the winter very pleasantly in Venice. The Riva is always warm on sunny days, and the Piazza loses nothing of its glory. Frost and ice have not hindered our artists from painting St. Mark's under these exceptional circumstances; and how beautiful it can be in a fall of snow Mr. Howells has told us in words that are a picture in themselves. Others, whose works are too well known and too recent to need mention, have shown us the fairness of hazy mornings in winter and the soft clearness of its twilight skies. The worst part is the absence of sun in the narrow *calli*, and the cutting winds which meet you at the corners, making you envy the *scaldino* which every woman carries and the brisk fires of the chestnut-roasters, who carry on a brisk trade in the alleys. But even sterner ordeals than these would be worth enduring for the sake of the burst of spring which follows close upon the darkest and dreariest winter-time.

A few warm, bright February days, and the whole city



wakes from the long sleep in which it has lain torpid for the last weeks. Faces look out again from the windows, people stand talking to each other from the balconies of different houses, bird-cages are hung out again along the upper stories of the alleys, and the cats steal out on the roofs to bask under dormer windows or make themselves at home among the chimney-pots. The streets are full of shouting and singing and the canals are alive with boats. Soon a mantle of fresh green clothes the old buildings with new brightness, fig-trees and acacias burst into leaf, the young ivy runs riot among the carved stone-work of the ancient well and wreathes the rusty iron ring to which the gondola is moored. The market-places are full of hyacinths and early lilies; the vines at the *traghetti* on the Riva and Canalazzo put forth delicate shoots, and not an old wall or dark courtyard but has a bud or leaf to wave at the coming spring.

This first gladness of early spring in Venice is charming, and better still the later months, when May ushers in the summer-time, with its long days and heavenly nights. But hard as it is to choose between the seasons, I am not sure that autumn is not the pleasantest time of all these. When here at home the cold north-west wind and sere leaves are already reminding us that the year is on the wane it is still summer in the lagoons.

The great heats are over, it is true; a thunder-storm or two has cooled the air and added keener zest to the pleasures of the out-of-doors life which the Venetian loves. The gay Riva is gayer than ever. On evenings when the band plays



RIO ALBRIZZI



the crowds on the Piazza overflow into the Piazzetta and stretch from the Royal Terrace all along the shore to the Public Gardens. Everywhere there is a fulness of life and colour. Now, if ever, it is the artists' time, and you meet them wherever you go, not only round St. Mark's and the Piazza, where they cluster like bees, but in the more remote quarters and distant canals, painting the fruit laden rafts or lingering to watch the sinking sun scatter clouds of fire over sky and sea and palace roofs. The sunsets are more splendid in September and October, I think, than at any time; and their glory lingers longer in our minds because we know they will soon be followed by those damp, white mists which rest in thick folds on the lagoon, hiding the scene from your eyes and sending their chilliness into your bones.

Flowers are still plentiful, roses abound in the market-places; you may still buy as many carnations as you can hold in both hands for a *soldo*. And better still, the fruit season is at its height, and brings a new wealth of colour into the narrowest streets and most desolate squares. Earlier in the year you have had the cherries and the strawberries; all the winter there were pyramids of oranges and lemons, and cart-loads of chestnuts, but now you have black and white grapes and purple figs, and scarlet tomatoes and pomegranates, and peaches, and apples and pears in countless profusion. At every corner of the Riva stalls and booths are set up laden with fruit of a thousand hues; at every turn of the streets you see the dark-green water-melons—*Zucchi santi*—which appear to form the chief food of the poorer classes at this

season. You pass a fruiterer's shop in some narrow lane and see them lying in a great heap under the picture of a Madonna, with a tiny oil-lamp burning in her honour and throwing a hundred sparkles into the rippling water below. A step or two further on and you find a dozen of the same round green balls, tumbled together in the archway of a bridge on the edge of the canal, while a ragged beggar-boy with a Murillo face and thick crop of curly hair is munching the biggest he can lay hands on.

All the morning fruit-vendors, with baskets of figs and grapes on their heads, throng the narrow streets between the Merceria and the Rialto; at evenfall a stream of boats and rafts are seen slowly wending their way across the Giudecca or along the Riva, bringing the produce of their gardens from Mazzorbo, from Malamocco, and Pelestrina, to the Venetian market. They are among the most picturesque craft in Venice these market-boats, piled up with grapes and pomegranates and vegetables, and rowed by strong-limbed fishermen with bronzed faces or black-eyed lads in torn blue hose and slouching hats. Sometimes a curly-headed child lies asleep in the stern, his head resting on a big cabbage; and I have a vivid remembrance of a brown-faced maiden, with a yellow handkerchief on her shoulders and a string of gold beads round her throat, who sat throned like a goddess among the fruit-baskets. The cloud-like masses of her wavy hair were gathered in loose tresses about her brows, her cheek rested thoughtfully on her hand and her dark eyes, turned with I know not what dream of yearning, towards the distant

islands lying in the pearly light of the far horizon, while the bark with its precious freight moved slowly over the green waters. It was a picture worthy of being painted by the hands of a Millet or a Costa.

These boats are often to be seen on the outskirts of the city or in the lagoons of Murano and Chioggia; but if you want to study them at your leisure you must go to the Rialto at evening when the peasant women are setting up their stalls for the morrow's market, and boatmen, in striped blue and white jackets, are talking and gesticulating on the steps of the quay, as one by one the fruit-laden rafts come in. It is a lively and animated scene, and apart from the charm of colour and movement in the busy human life that is always stirring there, the Venetian market has a peculiar interest. For this is the heart and core of old Venice, the very centre of her once mighty life. The pavement now trodden by fruiterers and peasants was of old the Exchange where her merchant-princes traded. That church behind the market is S. Giacomo di Rialto, which dates back to the Ninth Century and the days when the first Venetians fled before King Pepin to found the Republic of St. Mark and the Doges fixed their seats at *Riva alto*.

## VENETIAN PAINTING

HIPPOLYTE ADOLPHE TAINÉ

THE Academy of Fine Arts contains a collection of the earliest painters. A large picture in compartments, of 1380, somewhat barbarously, shows their origin: here, as elsewhere, the new art is seen issuing from Byzantine traditions. It appeared late, much later than in precocious and intelligent Tuscany. We find, however, in the Fourteenth Century, a Semitecolo and a Guariento, weak disciples of the school that Giotto founded at Padua; but in order to find the first national painters, we must come down to the middle of the following century. At this time, there lived in Murano a family of artists, the Vivarini. The eldest, Antonio, exhibits the rudiments of Venetian taste, such as old men with venerable beards, and bald heads, beautiful rosy or greenish draperies with melting tones; little angels, quite plump; and Madonnas with full cheeks. After him, his brother, Bartolomeo, undoubtedly instructed in the School of Padua, led painting for a short time towards hard relief and bony forms; but in him, as in the others, the feeling for rich colour is already visible. On leaving this antechamber of art we experienced a sensation that is not created by the similar rooms in Sienna and Florence; and this sensation is increased when we stand before the masters of this dim era, John Bellini and Carpaccio.





BACCHUS AND ARIADNE.  
*Tintoret.*



It is evident that, while following a path of its own, Venetian painting developed as in the rest of Italy. It issued here, as elsewhere, from missals and mosaics and was at first in sympathy with purely Christian emotion; then, by degrees, the feeling for beautiful human life introduced vigorous and healthy bodies taken from contemporary types into the altar-frames, and we wonder at the placid expressions and religious physiognomies on the blooming faces in which the youthful blood circulates and sustains innate temperament. This is the confluence of two spirits and two ages; one, the Christian which is fading away; the other, the Pagan, which is in the ascendant. In Venetian art special traits are distinguished. The people are more closely copied from life and are less transformed by classic or mystic sentiment, not so pure as at Perugia, not so noble as at Florence: they are addressed more to the senses than to the mind or the heart; they are more quickly recognised as men and give greater pleasure to the eye. Strong and lively tones colour their muscles and their faces; living flesh is soft on their shoulders and on the thighs of little children; clear landscapes open into the distance to make the deeper tints of the figure stand out; saints gather around the Virgin in a variety of attitudes unknown to the other primitive schools with their uniform processions. At the height of its fervour and faith, the national spirit, fond of diversity and joy, allows a smile to escape. Nothing is more striking in this respect than the eight pictures by Carpaccio of St. Ursula: all that we have spoken of is here and particularly the awkwardness of the mediæval image-maker.

He ignores half of the landscape and the nude: his rocks, bristling with trees, seem to have come from a psalter; frequently his trees look as if they were cut out of varnished sheet-iron; his ten thousand martyrs crucified on a mountain are as grotesque as the figures of an old mystery-play; you perceive that he has never been to Florence, and that he has not studied natural objects with Paolo Uccello nor human members and muscles with Pollaiuolo. On the other hand, we find in him the most chaste figures of the Middle Ages, and that extreme finish, that perfect sincerity, that flower of Christian conscientiousness which the following age, more sensual and rough, will trample upon in passion. The saint and her betrothed, with their flowing blonde hair, are grave and tender like legendary personages. At one time we see her asleep and hearing the announcement of her martyrdom from an angel; at another, kneeling with her husband to receive the benediction of the Pope; at another, lifted in glory above a crowded field of heads. In still another picture, she appears with Saint Anne and two old saints who are embracing each other. One cannot imagine more peaceful and pious figures. St. Ursula, pale and gentle, her head slightly bent, holds in her charming hands a banner and a green palm. Her silken hair falls over the virginal blue of her long robe, and a royal mantle bright with gold enfolds her. She is indeed a saint, for the candour, humility and delicacy of the Middle Ages are perfectly expressed in her gesture and glance. Such is the age and such the country. These paintings portray interesting customs and rich decorations. The

artist, as his great successors did after him, displays architecture, textiles, vessels, lordly processions, magnificently ornamented and lustrous robes, all somewhat out of proportion, but whose brilliancy and variety anticipate the work of the future, as an illuminated manuscript anticipates a picture.

There are certain families of plants, the species of which are so closely allied that they resemble more than they differ from each other: such are the Venetian painters, not only the four celebrities Giorgione, Titian, Tintoret, and Veronese, but others less illustrious, Palma "il Vecchio"; Bonifazio, Paris Bordone, Pordenone, and that host enumerated by Ridolfi in his *Lives*, contemporaries, relatives, and successors of the great men, Andrea Vicentino, Palma "il Giovine," Zelotti, Bazzaco, Padovino, Bassano, Schiavone, Moretto, and many others. What first appeals to the eye is the general and common type; the individual and personal traits remain for a time in shadow. They have worked together and by turns in the Ducal Palace, but by the involuntary concord of their talents their pictures make an harmonious whole.

At first our eyes are astonished; with the exception of three or four halls, the apartments are low and small. The Hall of the Council of the Ten and those surrounding it<sup>1</sup> are gilded habitations, insufficient for the figures that dwell therein; but after a moment one forgets the habitation and sees only the figures. Power and voluptuousness blaze there unbridled

<sup>1</sup> Painted by Veronese and by Zelotti and Bazzaco under his direction.

and superb. In the angles nude men, painted caryatides, jut out in such high relief that at the first glance one takes them for statues; a colossal breath swells their chests; their thighs and their shoulders writhe. On the ceiling, a Mercury, entirely nude, is almost a figure by Rubens, but of a more gross sensuality. A gigantic Neptune urges before him his sea-horses which plash through the waves; his foot presses the edge of his chariot; his enormous and ruddy body is turned backwards; he raises his conch with the joy of a bestial god; the salt wind blows through his scarf, his hair, and his beard; one could never imagine, without seeing it, such a furious *êlan*, such an overflowing of animal spirits, such a joy of pagan flesh, such a triumph of free and shameless life in the open air and broad sunlight. What an injustice to limit the Venetians to the painting of merely happy scenes and to the art of simply pleasing the eye! They have also painted grandeur and heroism; the mere energetic and active body has attracted them; like the Flemings, they have their colossi also. Their drawing, even without colour, is capable by itself of expressing all the solidity and all the vitality of the human structure. Look in this same hall at the four *grisailles* by Veronese—five or six women veiled or half-nude, all so strong and of such a frame that their thighs and arms would stifle a warrior in their embrace, and, nevertheless, their physiognomy is so simple or so proud that, despite their smile, they are virgins like Raphael's Venuses and Psyches.

The more we consider the ideal figures of Venetian art, the more we feel the breath of an heroic age behind us. Those

great draped old men with the bald foreheads are the patrician kings of the Archipelago, Barberesque sultans who, trailing their silken simärs, received tribute and order executions. The superb women in sweeping robes, bedizened and creased, are empress-daughters of the Republic, like that Catherina Cornaro from whom Venice received Cyprus. There are the muscles of fighters in the bronzed breasts of the sailors and captains; their bodies, reddened by the sun and wind, have dashed against the athletic bodies of janizaries; their turbans, their pelisses, their furs, their sword-hilts constellated with precious stones,—all the magnificence of Asia is mingled on their bodies with the floating draperies of antiquity and with the nudities of Pagan tradition. Their straight gaze is still tranquil and savage, and the pride and the tragic grandeur of their expression announce the presence of a life in which man was concentrated in a few simple passions, having no other thought than that of being master so that he should not be a slave, and to kill so that he should not be killed. Such is the spirit of a picture by Veronese which, in the Hall of the Council of the Ten, represents an old warrior and a young woman; it is an allegory, but we do not trouble ourselves about the subject. The man is seated and leans forward, his chin upon his hand, with a savage air; his colossal shoulders, his arm, and his bare leg encircled with a knemis of lions' heads start out of his ample drapery; with his turban, his white beard, his thoughtful brow, and his traits of a wearied lion, he has the appearance of a Pacha who is tired of everything. She, with downcast eyes, places her hands upon her soft breast; her



magnificent hair is caught up with pearls; she seems a captive awaiting the will of her master, and her neck and bowed face are strongly enpurpled in the shadow that encircles them.

Nearly all the other halls are empty; the paintings have been taken into an interior room. We go to find the curator of the Museum; we tell him in bad Italian that we have no letters of introduction, nor titles, nor any rights whatsoever to be admitted to see them. Thereupon he has the kindness to conduct us into the reserved hall, to lift up the canvases, one after the other, and to lose two hours in showing them to us.

I have never had greater pleasure in Italy; these canvases are now before our eyes; we can look at them as near as we please, at our ease, and we are alone. There are some browned giants by Tintoret, with their skin wrinkled by the play of the muscles. *Saint Andrew* and *Saint Mark*, real colossi like those of Rubens. There is a *Saint Christopher* by Titian, a kind of bronzed and bowed Atlas with his four limbs straining to bear the weight of a world, and on his neck, by an extraordinary contrast, the tiny, soft, and laughing *bambino*, whose infantine flesh has the delicacy and grace of a flower. Above all there are a dozen mythological and allegorical paintings by Tintoret and Veronese, of such brilliancy and such intoxicating fascination that a veil seems to fall from our eyes and we discover an unknown world, a paradise of delights situated beyond all imagination and all dreams. When the Old Man of the Mountain transported

into his harem his sleeping youths to render them capable of extreme devotion, doubtless it was such a spectacle that he furnished.

Upon a coast at the margin of the infinite sea, serious Ariadne receives the ring of Bacchus, and Venus, with a crown of gold, has come through the air to celebrate their marriage. Here is the sublime beauty of bare flesh, such as it appears coming out of the water vivified by the sun and touched with shadows. The goddess is floating in liquid light and her twisted back, her flanks and her curves are palpitating half enveloped in a white, diaphanous veil. With what words can we paint the beauty of an attitude, a tone, or an outline? Who will describe the healthy and roseate flesh under the amber transparency of gauze? How shall we represent the soft plenitude of a living form and the curves of limbs which flow into the leaning body? Truly she is swimming in the light like a fish in its lake, and the air, filled with vague reflections, embraces and caresses her.

Beside it are two young women, Peace and Plenty. With infinite delicacy Peace leans towards her sister; she is turning away and her head is in shadow, but she has the freshness of immortal youth. How luminous are their gathered tresses, yellow as the ripened wheat! Their legs and bodies are slightly deflected. One of them seems to be falling, and the curve of her moving body is adorable. No painter has appreciated so fully the yielding roundness, or arrested action so wonderfully. They are going to take a

posture, or walk away; the eye and mind involuntarily supply the action.

Still more animated and voluptuous is the coquetry of the group of *Mercury and the Three Graces*. All of them are leaning; for with Tintoret, a body is not living when its posture is motionless; the exhibition of a deflected figure adds a mobile grace to the general charm of beauty. One of the Graces, seated, extends her arms, and the light that falls on her thigh makes a part of her face, neck and breast glow against the indistinct purple shadow. Her sister, kneeling, with downcast eyes, clasps her hand; a long gauze scarf, fine as those silvery mists that illumine the fields at dawn, is twined about her waist and floats over her breast, the rosy tints of which are seen through it. In her other hand, she holds a blooming spray of flowers, the snowy whiteness of which contrasts with the purplish white of the rounded arm. The third, is lying at full length, in a tortuous pose, and the eye can embrace from neck to heel the superb framework of spine and hip. Wavy hair, tiny chin, rounded eyelids, slightly turned up nose, delicate ears like shells of mother-of-pearl,—her whole countenance expresses a joyous, half-malicious, archness; one would call her a bold courtesan.

These are the traits by which Tintoret is recognised: a certain roughness and violence, strong colours, unconstrained attitudes, and virile nudity. Veronese has more silvery and roseate tones, gentler figures, lighter shadows and more luxurious and restful decorations. Near a broken column a large and noble woman, Industry, seated by Innocence, is weaving

an ærial tissue; her laughing eyes are turned towards the blue of the sky, her crimped blonde hair is full of light; her half-opened mouth is a pomegranate; a vague smile allows her pearly teeth to be seen; and the atmosphere that surrounds her has the roseate hue of a brilliant dawn. The other, in an unstudied attitude, leans over her little lamb; the silvery reflections of her silken drapery glisten around her; her head is in shadow; but the blushing dawn illumines her lips, her ear and her cheek.

Such figures cannot be described; one could never have imagined that such poetry could exist in clothing and adornment. In another picture by Veronese, Venice, the Queen, is seated on a throne between Peace and Justice; her robe of white silk embroidered with golden lilies undulates over a mantle of ermine and scarlet; her arm, her delicate hand and her curving dimpled fingers rest their satin whiteness and their soft serpentine contours on the lustrous robe. The face is in shadow—a half shadow dewy with bluish, palpable atmosphere which enlivens the carmine lips; the lips are veritable cherries, and all this shadow is relieved by the high lights on the hair, by the soft gleams of the pearls on the neck and in the ears, and by the scintillations of the diadem whose jewels seem to be magical eyes. She smiles with an air of regal and beaming benignity, like a flower happy in the opening of its petals. Near her, Peace, is bowing so low that she is almost falling; her skirt of yellow silk embossed with red flowers is carelessly gathered into folds beneath the richest of violet mantles; strands of pearls are wound about

her light tresses beneath her white veil; and what a divine little ear she has!

There is another picture, still more celebrated, *The Rape of Europa*. For brilliancy, fancy, refinement and extraordinary invention in colour, it has no equal. The reflection of the foliage overhead bathes the whole picture with an aqueous, greenish tone; it even tints Europa's garment; she, arch and languishing, seems almost a figure of the Eighteenth Century. This is one of the works in which through the combination and subtlety of tones, a painter surpasses himself, forgets his audience and is lost in the unexplored regions of his art; for, forsaking all known rules, he finds, beyond the common every-day world, harmonies, contrasts and strange successes, beyond all verisimilitude. Rembrandt produced a similar work—with his *Night Watch*. You must look upon it and be silent.

In attempting to picture Titian, we imagine a happy man, “the happiest and the healthiest of his species, Heaven having bestowed upon him nothing but favours and felicities,” the first among his rivals, visited in his house by the Kings of France and Poland, a favourite of the Emperor, of Philip II., of the Doges, of Pope Paul III., of all the Italian princes, created a knight and a count of the Empire, overwhelmed with orders, liberally paid, pensioned and worthily enjoying his good fortune. He kept house in great state, dressed himself splendidly, and entertained at his table cardinals, lords, the greatest artists and the ablest writers of his day. Around him, beauty, taste, cultivation and talent



RAPE OF EUROPA.

VERONESE.





reflect back upon him, as if from a mirror, the brightness of his own genius. His brother, his son Orazio, his two cousins Cesare and Fabrizio, and his relative Marco di Titiano, are all excellent painters. His daughter, Lavinia, dressed as Flora, with a basket of fruit on her head, supplies him with a model of fresh complexion and ample form. His talent flows on like a great river in its bed; nothing disturbs its course and its own increase is sufficient; like Leonardo and Michelangelo, he sees nothing outside of his art.

We can see at the Academy the two extremes of his development, his last picture, a *Descent from the Cross*, finished by Palma the younger, and one of his early pictures, a *Visitation*, which he doubtless painted on leaving the school of John Bellini. An immense painting of his youth, *The Presentation of the Virgin*, shows with what boldness and ease he enters almost at the first expression of his genius upon the career which he is to pursue to the last.

In seeking for the principal trait which distinguishes him from his neighbours, we find that it is simplicity; by not refining on colour, action and types, he obtains powerful effects with colour, action and types. Such is the characteristic of his greatly celebrated *Assumption*. A reddish, purplish and intense tint envelops the entire picture; it is a most vigorous colour, and by its means a kind of healthful energy breathes through the whole painting. Below are the apostles leaning and seated, nearly all with their heads raised to Heaven and bronzed like the Adriatic sailors. Their hair and beards are black; an intense shadow hides their faces; the

sombre ferruginous tint hardly indicates their flesh. One of them, in the centre, in a brown cloak, almost disappears in the darkness, which seems darker on account of the surrounding brightness. Two blood red draperies are contrasted with two large green cloaks. It is all a confused commotion of writhing arms, muscular shoulders, impassioned heads, and flowing draperies. Overhead, midway in air, the Virgin ascends in glory, brilliant as the vapour of a furnace. She is of their race, strong and healthy, without exaltation, without a mystic smile, and proudly enveloped in her red robe and blue mantle. The material assumes a thousand folds from the motion of her superb body; her attitude is athletic, her expression grave, and the flat tone of her face comes out in full relief against the flaming brilliancy of the aureole. At her feet, extending over the entire space, is displayed a dazzling ring of young angels, whose fair and rosy flesh traversed by purple shadows contributes the brightest bloom of humanity as a contrast to the energetic tones and forms. Two of them have left the others and come forward to sport in full light, their infantile forms revelling in the air with charming ease. Venetian art centres in this work and perhaps reaches its climax in it.

## VENICE AND TINTORETTO

JOHN RICHARD GREEN

THE fall of Venice dates from the League of Cambray; but her victory over the crowd of her assailants was followed by half a century of peace and glory such as she had never known. Her losses on the mainland were in reality a gain, enforcing as they did the cessation of that policy of Italian aggression which had eaten like a canker into the resources of the State, and drawn her from her natural career of commerce and aggrandisement on the sea. If the political power of Venice became less, her political influence grew greater than ever. The statesmen of France, of England, and of Germany studied in the cool, grave school of her Senate. We need only turn to *Othello* to find reflected the universal reverence for the wisdom of her policy and the order of her streets. No policy, however wise, could, indeed, avert her fall. The Turkish occupation of Egypt, and the Portuguese discovery of a sea route round the Cape of Good Hope, were destined to rob the Republic of that trade with the East which was the life-blood of its commerce. But, though the blow was already dealt, its effects were for a time hardly discernible. On the contrary, the accumulated wealth of centuries poured itself out in an almost riotous prodigality. A new Venice, a Venice of loftier palaces, of statelier colonnades, rose under Palladio and San-

sovino along the line of its canals. In the deep peace of the Sixteenth Century, a peace unbroken even by religious struggles (for Venice was the one State exempt from the struggle of the Reformation), literature and art won their highest triumphs. The press of the Aldi gave for the first time the masterpieces of Greek poetry to Europe. The novels of Venice furnished plots for our own drama, and became the origin of modern fiction. Painting reached its loftiest height in Giorgione, Titian, Tintoretto and Paul Veronese.

The greatest of colourists sprung from a world of colour. Faded, ruined as the city is now, the frescoes of Giorgione swept from its palace fronts by the sea-wind, its very gondoliers bare and ragged, the glory of its sunsets alone remain vivid as of old. But it is not difficult to restore the many-hued Venice out of which its painters sprung. There are two pictures by Carpaccio in the Accademia which bring back vividly its physical aspect. The scene of the first, the *Miracle of the Patriarch of Grado*, as it is called, lies on the Grand Canal, immediately in front of the Rialto. It is the hour of sunset, and dark-edged clouds are beginning to fleck the golden haze of the west which still arches over the broken sky-line, roof and turret, and bell-tower, and chimneys of strange fashion with quaint conical tops. The canal lies dusk in the eventide, but the dark surface throws into relief a crowd of gondolas and the lithe glowing figures of their gondoliers. The boats themselves are long and narrow as now, but without the indented prora which has become uni-



PALAZZO GIUSTINIANI VESCOVI



## VENICE AND TINTORETTO 307

versal; the sumptuary law of the Republic has not yet robbed them of colour, and instead of the present "coffin" we see canopies of gaily-hued stuffs supported on four light pillars. The gondolier, himself, is commonly tricked out in almost fantastic finery; red cap, with long golden curls flowing down over the silken doublet, slashed hose, the light dress displaying those graceful attitudes into which the rower naturally falls. On the left side of the canal, its white marble steps are crowded with figures of the nobler Venetian life; a black robe here and there breaking the gay variety of golden and purple and red and blue; while in the balcony above a white group of clergy, with golden candlesticks towering overhead, are gathered round the demoniac whose cure forms the subject of the picture.

But the most noteworthy point in it is the light it throws on the architectural aspect of Venice at the close of the Fifteenth Century. On the right the houses are wholly of Mediæval type, the flat marble-sheeted fronts pierced with trefoil-headed lights; one of them, splendid with painted arabesques, dipping at its base into the very waters of the canal, and mounting up to inwreath in intricate patterns the very chimneys of the roof. The left is filled by a palace of the early Renaissance; but the change of architectural style, though it has modified the tone and extent of colour, is far from dismissing it altogether. The flat pilasters which support the round arches of its base are sheeted with a delicately tinged marble; the flower work of their capitals and the mask inclosed within it are gilded like the continuous



billet moulding which runs round in the hollow of each arch; while the spandrils are filled in with richer and darker marbles, each broken with a central medallion of gold. The use of gold, indeed, seems a "note" of the colouring of the early Renaissance; a broad band of gold wreathes the two rolls beneath and above the cornice, and lozenges of gold light up the bases of the light pillars in the colonnade above. In another picture of Carpaccio, the *Dismissal of the Ambassadors*, one sees the same principles of colouring extended to the treatment of interiors. The effect is obtained partly by the contrast of the lighter marbles with those of deeper colour or with porphyry, partly by the contrast of both with gold. Everywhere, whether in the earlier buildings of Mediæval art or in the later efforts of the Renaissance, Venice seems to clothe itself in robes of Oriental splendour, and to pour over Western art before its fall the wealth and gorgeousandness of the East.

Of the four artist-figures who—in the tradition of Tintoretto's picture—support this "Golden Calf" of Venice, Tintoretto himself is the one specially Venetian. Giorgione was of Castel Franco. Titian came from the mountains of Cadore; Paolo from Verona. But Jacopo Robusti, the "little dyer," the tintoretto, was born, lived, and died in Venice. His works, rare elsewhere, crowd its churches, its palaces, its galleries. Its greatest art-building is the shrine of his faith. The school of San Rocco has rightly been styled by Mr. Ruskin "one of the three most precious buildings in the world"; it is the one spot where all is Tintoretto. Few

## VENICE AND TINTORETTO 309

contrasts are at first sight more striking than the contrast between the building of the Renaissance which contains his forty masterpieces, and the great Mediæval church of the Frari which stands beside it. But a certain oneness, after all, links the two buildings together. The friars had burst on the caste spirit of the Middle Age, its mere classification of brute force, with the bold recognition of human equality which ended in the socialism of Wyclif and the Lollards. Tintoretto found himself facing a new caste-spirit in the Renaissance, a classification of mankind found on æsthetic refinement and intellectual power; and it is hard not to see in the greatest of his works a protest as energetic as theirs for the common rights of men. Into the grandeur of the Venice about him, her fame, her wealth, her splendour, none could enter more vividly. He rises to his best painting, as Mr. Ruskin has observed, when his subjects are noble—doges, saints, priests, senators clad in purple and jewels and gold. But Tintoretto is never quite Veronese. He cannot be untrue to beauty, and the pomps and glories of earth are beautiful to him; but there is a beauty too in earth, in man himself. The brown, half naked gondolier lies stretched on the marble steps which the doge, in one of his finest pictures, has ascended. It is as if he had stripped off the stately robe and ducal cap and shown the soul of Venice in the bare child of the lagoons. The “want of dignity” which some have censured in his scenes from the Gospels is in them just as it is in the Gospels themselves. Here, as there, the poetry lies in the strange, unearthly mingling of the commonest human life

with the sublimest divine. In his *Last Supper*, in San Giorgio Maggiore, the apostles are peasants; the low, mean life of the people is there, but hushed and transfigured by the tall standing figure of the Master, who bends to give bread to the disciple by his side. And above and around crowd in the legions of Heaven, cherubim and seraphim mingling their radiance with the purer radiance from the halo of their Lord; while amidst all this conflict of celestial light the twinkling candles upon the board burn on, and the damsel who enters bearing food, bathed as she is in the very glory of Heaven, is busy, unconscious—a serving maid, and nothing more.

The older painters had seen something undivine in man; the colossal mosaic, the tall unwomanly Madonna, expressed the sense of the Byzantine artist that to be divine was to be inhuman. The Renaissance, with little faith in God, had faith in man but only in the might and beauty and knowledge of man. With Tintoretto the common life of man is ever one with Heaven. This was the faith which he flung on “acres of canvas” as ungrudgingly as apostle ever did, toiling and living as apostles lived and toiled. This was the faith he found in Old Testament and New, in saintly legend or in national history. In *The Annunciation* at San Rocco a great bow of angels streaming either way from the ethereal dove sweeps into a ruined hut, a few mean chairs its only furniture, the mean plaster dropping from the bare brick pilasters; without, Joseph at work unheeding, amidst piles of worthless timber flung here and there. So, in *The Adora-*

## VENICE AND TINTORETTO 311

*tion of the Magi*, the mother wonders with a peasant's wonder at the jewels and gold. Again, *The Massacre of the Innocents* is one wild, horror-driven rush of pure motherhood, reckless of all in its clutch at its babe. So, in the splendour of his *Circumcision*, it is from the naked child that the light streams on the high-priest's brow, on the mighty robe of purple and gold held up by stately forms like a vast banner behind him. The peasant mother to whose poorest hut that first stir of child life has brought a vision of angels, who has marvelled at the wealth of precious gifts which a babe brings to her breast, who has felt the sword piercing her own bosom also as danger threatened it, on whose mean world her child has flung a glory brighter than glory of earth, is the truest critic of Tintoretto.

What Shakespeare was to the national history of England in his great series of historic dramas, his contemporary, Tintoretto was to the history of Venice. It was, perhaps, from an unconscious sense that her annals were really closed that the Republic began to write her history and her exploits in the series of paintings which covers the walls of the Ducal Palace. Her apotheosis is like that of the Roman emperors; it is when death has fallen upon her that her artists raise her into a divine form, throned amid heavenly clouds, and crowned by angel hands with the laurel wreath of victory. It is no longer St. Mark who watches over Venice; it is Venice herself who bends from Heaven to bless boatmen and Senator. In the divine figure of the Republic with which Tintoretto filled the central cartoon of the Great Hall every

Venetian felt himself incarnate. His figure of *Venice* in the Senate Hall is yet nobler; the blue sea-depths are cleft open, and strange ocean shapes wave their homage, and yet more unearthly forms dart up with tribute of coral and pearls to the feet of the sea queen as she in the silken state of the time with the divine halo around her. But if from this picture in the roof the eye falls suddenly on the fresco which fills the close of the room, we can hardly help reading the deeper comment of Tintoretto on the glory of the State. The Sala del Consiglio is the very heart of Venice. In the double row of plain seats running round it sat her nobles; on the raised dais at the end, surrounded by the graver senators, sat her duke. One long fresco occupies the whole wall above the ducal seat; in the background the blue waters of the lagoon, with the towers and domes of Venice rising from them; around, a framework of six bending saints; in front, two kneeling doges in full ducal robes, with a black curtain of clouds between them. The clouds roll back to reveal a mighty glory, and in the heart of it the livid figure of a dead Christ taken from the Cross. Not one eye of all the nobles gathered in council could have lifted itself from the figure of the doge without falling on the figure of the dead Christ. Strange as the conception is, it is hard to believe that in a mind so peculiarly symbolical as that of Tintoretto the contrast could have been without a definite meaning. And if this be so, it is a meaning that one can hardly fail to read in the history of the time. The brief interval of peace and glory had passed away ere Tintoretto's brush had ceased to toil.

## VENICE AND TINTORETTO 313

The victory of Lepantø had only gilded that disgraceful submission to the Turk which preluded the disastrous struggle in which her richest possessions were to be wrested from the Republic. The terrible plague of 1576 had carried off Titian. Twelve years after Titian, Paul Veronese passed away. Tintoretto, born almost at its opening, lingered till the very close of the century to see Venice sinking into powerlessness and infamy and decay. May not the figure of the dead Christ be the old man's protest against a pride in which all true nobleness and effort had ceased to live, and which was hurrying to so shameful a fall?

## FLOODS IN THE CITY

HORATIO F. BROWN

THE floods in the city have a different cause from those which desolate the mainland. The sea and the wind are responsible for them, and not the continual pour of rain upon the Alps. No doubt, before the rivers—the Piave, the Sile, and the Brenta—were canalised, and their mouths diverted from the lagoons into the open sea, a flood on the mainland would mean high water in Venice; but now the principal author of a flood in the city is “that son of a dog, the sirocco.” A heavy wind blowing up the Adriatic for two days, and sending a turbid sea rolling on the sands of the Lido, virtually blocks the mouths by which the tidal waters escape from the lagoons into the open. The down-going tide cannot pass out till it has lost its hour for falling, and begins to turn and rise again. Then it comes sweeping in before the wind, swirling round the point by Sant’ Elena and the public gardens, streaming along the curve by the Riva degli Schiavoni, dividing at the point of the Dogana, where half the grey-green flood pours up the Grand Canal, and half fills the wider Giudecca from marge to marge.

The floods usually take place in the morning. As one opens the window a blast of warm, moist air streams into the room, wetting all the walls, and standing in drops on the



scagliolo pavement; the air is thick and heavy, and charged with salt sea-spray; and far off, above the roofs of the houses, their reigns a continual booming noise, unremitting and impressive in its pervasiveness—it is the roar of the sea on the Lido, two miles or more away. Then the small canal below the window begins to feel the incoming tide. The chips of hay or of wood, the cabbage-stalks and scraps of old matting, move uneasily, as if in doubt which way they are to go; then, with a final turn on their pivots, they yield to the current and sweep away towards the Giudecca. The colour of the water changes to a pale pea-green, not quite clear, but looking as if it had come fresh from the sea. Steadily the tide flows faster and faster under the bridge, and the market men and gondoliers secure their boats to the posts. So it goes on for an hour or more till the jade-coloured flood has nearly brimmed to the edge of the *fondamenta*, but not yet overflowed it. Then the water begins to appear in the *calle*; it comes welling up through every drain-hole and between the flags of the pavement, bubbling like a little geyser and making a low gurgling noise; for the sea begins to flood Venice under the pavements, and not over the *fondamente*, which are usually higher than the streets. Presently the baker puts out a board to serve as a bridge for his customers; but soon the water from the canal has joined that in the *calle*; the bridge ceases to be of use, and floats idly away. Presently the sea rises; it creeps under the large door of the palace, and swells the little pools that are bubbling up in the courtyard, and flows right out by the great gates on the Grand Canal, converting

the whole cortile into a lake. Then the first boat passes down the *calle* stopping at the shop doors to pick up fares, and bare-legged men offer their services as porters from the high bridge steps to the upper end of the street, which is still dry. Indeed, the flood is an excuse for the display of bare legs, and half the population of the quarter are tucked above the knee. All the windows are full of women and children, laughing at the traffic below—laughing at the thrifty, high-kilted housewife, out for her marketing, who grudges a *centesimo* for the boat and shrinks from the portorage; laughing at the thin-shod dandy, whose hat was blown off and umbrella turned inside out, and who looks disgust at the wind; laughing at the heavy man who nearly brings himself and his beaver prone upon the water. Then suddenly, without a moment's warning, there is a dazzling flash of lightning, a rattling peal; every face disappears from the windows, and all the green shutters go to with a bang.

The streets are full of people, most of them bound for the Piazza to see the fun. There is laughter and jesting everywhere, and the impression of a capital joke in bare legs and top boots; the people get their amusement out of it all, though the basements of their houses are soaking and their winter firewood slowly taking in the water. Here is one woman marching along through the flood, serenely regardless of indiscreet disclosure; another in a pair of high top boots, lent by her friend, who stands on the bridge and looks on. The Piazza is one large lake from the door of Saint Mark's up to the raised walk that runs under the colonnades.

and right down the Piazzetta out into the stormy lagoon. Under the colonnades a crowd promenades or stands in the arches watching the boats, the gondolas, sandolos and barche, that charge two *centisimi* for a row. The bright mosaics of Saint Mark's *façade*, and the long lines of the two Procuratie seem to gain in colour and in form as they rise right up from this level of the sea. The doves go wheeling about in the upper air, half in alarm at the unwonted sight below them. Hard by the two granite columns at the sea end of the Piazzetta, some speculators have fixed a rickety wooden bridge two planks wide, that leads to the Ponte della Paglia; but the wind is so high that only a venturesome few attempt the passage, and more, it would seem, to keep the game alive than from any pressure of business, they are greeted with applause or laughter as they make the transit in safety or lose their hats on the way. Presently the water begins to go down, and then comes a regular stampede of all the boats in the Piazza, for once caught there, it is a serious matter to lift a gondola down to the sea. In a moment the bridge is broken up, and the boats, in extricable confusion, come streaming down the Piazzetta, bumping together or now and then giving an ominous crunch against the flags. There is laughter, encouragement, and help from the on-looking crowd. Any excuse serves for some one to rush into the water: a hand to this gondola, a lift to that barchetta. In a very short space the Piazza is empty once more. The water falls fast, leaving patches of green seaweed on the stones. Out towards San Giorgio and the gardens a heavy haze hangs

in the sky; a wind laden with foam drives inward from the sea. There is the perpetual boom of the Adriatic on the beach, and the hot breath of the sirocco sweeping over the heaving grey expanse of water that breaks in waves on the marble steps and foundations of the Piazzetta.

## VENETIAN MELANCHOLY

JOHN ADDINGTON SYMONDS

IT is one of those evenings charged with an inexplicable melancholy, what the French call "*indicible tristesse*." Outside upon the broad canal of the Giudecca, fog-horns are calling from sea-going steamers, and now and then the weird sting of a siren, like a writhing sound-serpent or a banshee's cry, shivers from nowhere, nowhither, through the opaque mist. Is it from our nerves, or from something altered and set wrong in Nature, some unwholesome wind, some depression preceding thunderstorm or earthquake, that this sense of a profound gloom settles down quite unexpectedly? Then all life seems wasted: the heart is full of hidden want! We know not what we desire; but an atmosphere of wistfulness is everywhere. What we have achieved, what we possess, shows dull, flat and unprofitable. Only what we have not, or lies beyond the scope of possibilities, gleams before the soul's gaze like a bright particular star.

November 1. There has been a succession of sad sumptuous autumn days, the lagoons asleep, gently heaving in long undulations beneath the immense dome of varied greys, modulating from the warmest violets to the coldest slaty hues; mournful pageants of sunset, hanging roses and flakes of crimson fire over the whole expanse of heaven's pavilion.

November 2. We go out in the gondola, Angelo, Vittorio

and I, every afternoon, and moor ourselves to a palo beyond the Porto del Lido, there where the new breakwater is being made, and one looks toward the open sea with flocks of many-tinted fishing boats in the far offing. Here we sit and smoke and talk a little. I read, and wine from Poggio Gherardo gurgles through the thin neck of a Tuscan flask. The expanse of water is quite smooth, with just an indefinable sense of ebb and flow. All phases of the sky are repeated on the glassy surface; and after the long windless days we have lately been enjoying, the water itself has run crystal clear. One can look right down to the grassy weeds and to the bottom; and where light glints through upon an oar or whitened stake, gemmy patches of aquamarine tints (such as Tiepolo loved to splash for highest colour-accent on his blues), yield infinite if tranquil pleasure to the eye. Then comes the sunset: and all the furnace of the west has long since smouldered into ashes above Padua before we regain our home on the Zattere.

November 3. We rowed as usual to our palo, and let ourselves be lost, like a speck, in that immensity of sky and water. Not sea—there is little feeling of the true sea here. Only messages exchanged between the Adriatic and Venetian by incoming or outgoing vessels. Low lines of long shallow islands broken here and there by church towers and tufted with stunted trees, remind us that this is no more than an outlying piece of mainland, covered by sheets of brackish water. There is a peculiar melancholy in this advanced guard of the continent, where the rivers of the Alps and

Lombardy are gradually gaining on the sea, depositing their silt through centuries. I remember experiencing the same sadness on the lagoons at Tunis, where Carthage has been utterly erased, as possibly Venice will be one day also. You forget the rival mistress of the world with Rome, and only feel the desert and the solemn expanse of lake. Towards evening rosy shoals of cloud float across the sky, and take a keener hue on the sheeny deeps beneath, while between the heavens and their reflections sail ponderous battalions of flamingoes making a third series of rose-tinted cloudlets. Melancholy and gorgeous colour-richness are combined in a singular degree throughout the landscape of lagoons.

November 4. I will try to catch the special note of a sunset I saw yesterday from our customary station. Peculiar qualities of life and movement are given to these Venetian lagoons by the continual passage through them of considerable rivers, the Brenta and Sile. Also by the fact that there is a small tide in the Adriatic. It is not dead water like that of a land-locked lake, but water subject to complex conditions of influx and outflow of salt-currents combined with the perpetual course of inland torrents debouching through channels delved by them in the soft mud of the basin at points of least resistance and easiest access to the gaps between the belting islands. The lagoon then though it in no way resembles the sea, has a character of change and varying motion which makes it interesting without disturbing its unrivalled excellence as a reflecting surface.



The tide, at half-past three, was running out like a steady stream, making our moored boat throb with a rhythmic shudder seaward. Then came a pause, and then a different tremor. New shivers in a contrary direction thrilled the keel, and we felt that the pulse of the lagoon was turning landward. It is difficult to avoid shades of language appropriate to vital processes while speaking of this alteration in the tide. How can we think of it as the mechanical effect of gravitation upon fluid masses, when we remember how much of animal and vegetable life over the whole of that huge area is waiting on the subtle changes? To the sense of weeds and molluscs, sponges, crustaceans, and worms, ebb and flow must be equivalent to the systole and diastole of a mighty heart. We wrong the logic of our heads perhaps, but we get closer to Nature by indulging mythological illusions, and making our nerves sensitive to what for these creatures are the conditions of existence. Then, too, have not we emerged from them, and does not, perhaps, their sympathy with natural and diurnal changes survive in all the operations of our sentient imagination? The sky was one vast dome of delicately graduated greys, dove-breasted, ashen, violet, blurred-blue, rose-tinted, tawny, all drenched and drowned in the prevailing tone of sea-lavender. The water heaving, undulating, swirling at no point stationary, yet without a ripple on its vitreous pavement, threw back those blended hues, making them here and there more flaky and distinct in vivid patches of azure or of crimson. Not very far away, waiting for a breeze to carry them toward Torcello, lay half a dozen

fishing boats with sails like butterflies a-tremble on an open flower: red, orange, lemon, set by some ineffable tact of Nature just in the right place to heighten and accentuate her symphony of tender tints. The sun was nowhere visible. No last rays flamed from the horizon, illuminating, as they sometimes do, that fretwork of suspended vapours with a sudden glory of mingled blood and fire. We knew that he had set, for a cindery pallor overspread the world; and we turned homeward, splashing the silent waters with the cadence of our oars. But soon, as though some celestial quarrel between planetary or sidereal powers had ended, and heaven were washed with tears of reconciliation and repentance, the roof of clouds dissolved into immeasurable air. Luna, just risen, full and radiant, sailed in a sky of brilliant blue. The colour was intense and omnipresent: so blue, so blue: bathing thin mists which lay along the face of the lagoon: tingeing pearly mackerel clouds lazily afloat above. White-sailed ships, like sheeted phantoms, swam past us through the twilight. The churches of Venice, S. Giorgio, Redentore, Salute, loomed, large and dusky silhouettes, emergent from the clinging vapours. Whenever the moistened lead upon their roofs and cupolas caught moonlight, it shone with silver. The concave of the sky mirrored in the concave of the water formed one sphere of azure mystery, moving through which was like being in the heart of some pale milky sapphire. Only at intervals, along the quays, lamps, dilated into globes, with golden reflections sagging down along the bluish water, broke and gave value to the dominant chord. Deep-tongued

bells from far and near thrilled the whole scene translating its *motif* of colour into congenial qualities of sound.

November 5. Why do ye toil hither and thither upon paths laborious and peril-fraught? Seek what ye are seeking: but it is not there where ye are seeking it. Ye are seeking a life of blessedness in the realm of death. It is not there. Stirred to the depths by those miracles, my soul seemed to know what she was wanting, and at the same time knew that even to desire it was vanity; to possess it would be dust and ashes. The pains of thought, the sickness of the Soul, the thirst for things impossible, are soothed by communion with Nature. What can be more tranquillising than this breadth of sea and sky, the cool caressing lisp of those inflowing waters, the simplicity of yonder overarching cloud-pavilion? The day is dying imperceptibly. There is no question of a melodramatic display of colour. The vapours of the plain already hide the sun's disc. I gaze forward into the profound blues of the eastern heavens. And then, without turning my head westward, I become aware that some change is taking place above the fields of Lombardy. For that vast gulf of blue, which erewhile was opaque and dull like indigo, is gradually growing transparent, warming into amethyst, assuming hues of iris, violet, and hyacinth. Flame seems filtering down into it from the zenith. The willows and acacia trees upon the shore of S. Erasmo are passing from the dull green of distant foliage into the brilliancy of chrysoberyl, the fervour of chrysophase, the pallucidity of jade. It is not easy to detach one's gaze from this spectacle; yet

turn I must and peer into the west. Between Fusiana and Malghera the cloud-canopy has lifted, leaving a blank space of sky above the buried sun. This is luminous with crimson, orange, citron, flecked with stationary lakes of molten gold: a great white planet swims suspended in their midst. The refraction of that light upon the eastern horizon caused the blues to blush. So, having fed my eyes with red and yellow fire, I turn again, and now the purples of the east, by contrast with those other hues, appear intolerable in their ardour and intensity of colour. The cold azure sucks our sense of vision into depths of incandescent fluor-spar: and just athwart the core of that cerulean pyre floats a barge piled high with hay, the sombre green of which has also caught the glow, and burns.

November 6. There has been a total eclipse of the moon. We were returning after sunset from our accustomed post. The sun, this time, sank like a round vermilion ball into the plain of Padua. The sky was hard and clear. Like a flawless topaz the west shone, with all the buildings of the city cut out in solid shapes of purple darkness against that background. There was no mystery, no illusion, except in the daffodils and saffrons of the heaving waterfloor. Behind S. Pietro di Castello peered up a little jagged notch of white light, like an abnormal planet splintered out of shape. This was the eclipsed moon rising. But the earth's shadow gradually passed away, and the azure splendours of that previous evening were renewed, pitched in a key of higher clarity.

November 7. This summer of S. Martin is overpoweringly

beautiful; a gradual dying of the year in tranquil pomps and glowing pageants. Every evening on the lagoon brings a new spectacle of ethereal and subtly coloured loveliness. So musical, so melancholy, so far diviner, than the blare and glory of the springtime. It is infinitely sweet and sad, this whisper of the fading autumn bestowing all its stored-up passion and fruitage in dim twilight hours. Immeasurable breadth, unfathomable mystery, illimitable repose of coming slumber. I read in a book to-day that it must have taken one hundred millions of years to form the earth's crust, and the crust has only an average of twenty miles in depth. Inside, all is still and molten rock and raging gases in combustion. One hundred millions of years to form a thin surface of elastic stuff for plants, beasts, and men and cities to exist on. And of all that time the history of our race, ascertained by documents, has only occupied five thousand years at most.

Ah! what is man, and why does he disquietude his soul and think so much about his destiny?

"Creatures of a day"? What is a man and what is a man not? Dreaming so, I sweep along the jetty of S. Niccolo di Lido through the sunset, with Angelo in front and Vittorio upon the poop. We pass a laden boat. On the boat, erect, sturdily rowing, is a young man, whose face, fronting the mellow spaces of the west, seems in its perfect and peculiar beauty to be "the programme of all good." A whole life of exquisite emotion and superb energy expressed there. A God-created inimitable thing. A master-piece of Nature, to frame which all the rest seems made. I am a soul, he is a

soul: we shall never meet: each of us has some incalculable doom, and neither of us knows what that doom is. What I really know is that in this intense momentary vision resides the most poignant of all stings to wake me into passionate indifference to time and chance and change, the laws which clip me round and stifle me. It falls away and fades, and he becomes a memory which leaves an unextinguished smart.

November 8. All those beautiful pomps and pageants have been again engulfed in sea-fog, and I listen this night to the complaining fret of boats moored close beneath my windows, the dreary hootings of sea-going vessels, the shrill, thin eldritch scream of sirens. Moments come in the hyper-sensitive life of artistic natures, come unbidden and uncaused, when we are assailed by desolate intimations of the inutility of all things, the vanity of our existence, the visionary fabric of the universe, the incomprehensibility of self, the continuous and irreparable flight of time—when our joys and sorrows, our passion and our shame, our endeavours to achieve and our inertia of languor, seem but a mocking film, an iridescent scum upon the treacherous surface of a black and bottomless abyss of horrible inscrutability. At these times, like Pascal, we fain would set a screen up to veil the ever-present gulf that yawns before our physical and mental organs of perception. Alas for those who, feeling the realities of beauty and emotion so acutely having such power at times to render them by words or forms for others, must also feel with poignant intensity the grim and transitory nature of the ground on which we tread, of the flesh and clothes us round,



of the desires that fret our brains, the duties we perform, the thoughts that keep our will upon the stretch through months of unremunerative labour.

It is easy to stigmatise these moods as morbid. It is clear that yielding to them would entail paralysis of energy, decrepitude, disease. It is not certain that recording them serves any useful purpose. Yet they are real, a serious factor in the experience of sentient and reflective personalities. Duly counterpoised by strenuous activity and steady self-effectuation, they constitute for the artist and the thinker what might be compared to a "retreat" for the religious. They force a man to recognise his own incalculable littleness in the vast sum of things.

They teach him to set slight store on his particular achievement. They make him understand that seeming-bitter sentence of the Gospel, "Say, we are unprofitable servants, we have done that which was our duty to do." Also they have the minor value of dissipating vain glammers of fame or blame, of popular applause or public condemnation, of vulgar display and petty rivalries with others. Emerging from them, the man, made wiser and saner, proceeds to work at that which lieth nearest to his hand to do.

Michelangelo, than whom none ever laboured with more single-hearted purpose and with haughtier constancy in his appointed field of art, professed a special dedication to the thought of death.

"This thought," he said, "is the only one which makes us know our proper selves, which holds us together in the bond



of our own nature, which saves us from being stolen away by kinsmen, friends, great men of parts, by avarice, ambition, and those other faults and vices which filch one from himself. Keep him distraught and dispersed, without permitting him to retire into himself and to reunite his scattered parts." Such then are the uses of what the world calls melancholy, "Sweet dainty melancholy." Thanksgiving to the places where moods like these are nobly, beautifully nurtured, and where their very presence in the soul is the purgation of its baser passions.

*AFTERNOON EXCURSIONS: SAN LAZZARO—MALAMOCCO—FUSINA  
—THE LIDO*

*JOHN ADDINGTON SYMONDS*

**T**HE mornings are spent in study, sometimes among pictures, sometimes in the Marcian Library, or again in those vast convent chambers of the Frari, where the archives of Venice load innumerable shelves. The afternoons invite us to a further flight upon the water. Both sandolo and gondola await our choice, and we may sail or row, according as the wind and inclination tempt us.

Yonder lies San Lazzaro, with the neat red buildings of the Armenian convent. The last oleander blossoms shine rosy pink above its walls against the pure blue sky as we glide into the little harbour. Boats piled with coal-black grapes block the landing-place, for the Padri are gathering their vintage from the Lido, and their presses run with new wine. Eustace and I have not come to revive memories of Byron—that curious patron saint of the Armenian convent—or to inspect the printing-press, which issues books of little value for our studies. It is enough to face the terrace, and linger half an hour beneath the low broad arches of the alleys pleached with vines, through which the domes and towers of Venice rise more beautiful by distance.



LIDO: VIEW OF S. MARIA ELISABETTA



Malamocco lies considerably farther, and needs a full hour of stout rowing to reach it. Alighting there, we cross the narrow strip of land, and find ourselves upon the huge sea-wall—block piled on block—of Istrian stone in tiers and ranks, with cunning breathing-places for the waves to wreak their fury on and foam their force away in fretful waste. The very existence of Venice may be said to depend sometimes on these *murazzi*, which were finished at an immense cost by the Republic in the days of its decadence. The enormous monoliths which compose them had to be brought across the Adriatic in sailing-vessels. Of all the Lidi, that of Malamocco is the weakest; and here, if any where, the sea might effect an entrance into the lagoon. Our gondoliers told us of some places where the *murazzi* were broken in a gale or *sciroccale*, not very long ago. Lying awake in Venice, when the wind blows hard, one hears the sea thundering upon its sandy barrier, and blesses God for the *murazzi*. On such a night it happened once to me to dream a dream of Venice overwhelmed by water. I saw the billows roll across the smooth lagoon like a gigantic Eager. The Ducal Palace crumbled, and San Marco's domes went down. The Campanile rocked and shivered like a reed. And all along the Grand Canal the palaces swayed helpless, tottering to their fall, while boats piled high with men and women strove to stem the tide, and save themselves from those impending ruins. It was a mad dream, born of the sea's roar and Tintoretto's painting. But this afternoon no such visions are suggested. The sea

sleeps, and in the moist autumn air we break tall branches of the seeded yellowing samphire from hollows of the rocks, and bear them homeward in a wayward bouquet mixed with cobs of Indian-corn.

Fusina is another point for these excursions. It lies at the mouth of the Canal di Brenta, where the mainland ends in marsh and meadows, intersected by broad *renes*. In spring the ditches bloom with fleur-de-lys; in autumn they take sober colouring from lilac daisies and the delicate sea-lavender. Scores of tiny plants are turning scarlet on the brown moist earth; and when the sun goes down behind the Euganean hills, his crimson canopy of cloud reflected on these shallows, muddy shoals, and wilderness of matted weeds, converts the common earth into a fairyland of fabulous dyes. Purple, violet and rose are spread around us. In front stretches the lagoon, tinted with a pale light from the east, and beyond this pallid mirror shines Venice,—a long, low, broken line, touched with the softest roseate flush. Ere we reach the Giudecca on our homeward way, sunset has faded. The western skies have clad themselves in green, barred with dark fire-rimmed clouds. The Euganean hills stand like stupendous pyramids, Egyptian, solemn against a lemon space on the horizon. The far reaches of the lagoons, the Alps, and islands assume those tones of glowing lilac which are the supreme beauty of Venetian evening. Then, at last, we see the first lamps glitter on the Zattere. The quiet of the night has come.

Words cannot be formed to express the endless varieties

of Venetian sunset. The most magnificent follow after wet stormy days, when the west breaks suddenly into a labyrinth of fire, when chasms of clear turquoise heavens emerge, and horns of flame are flashed to the zenith, and unexpected splendours scale the fretted clouds, step over step stealing along the purple caverns till the whole dome throbs. Or, again, after a fair day, a change of weather approaches, and high infinitely high, the skies are woven over with a web of half-transparent cirrus-clouds. These in the afterglow blush crimson, and through their rifts the depth of heaven is of a hard and gem-like blue, and all the water turns to rose beneath them. I remember one such evening on the way back from Torcello. We were well out at sea between Mazzorbo and Murano. The ruddy arches overhead were reflected without interruption in the waveless ruddy lake below. Our black boat was the only dark spot in this sphere of splendour. We seemed to hang suspended; and such as this, I fancied, must be the feeling of an insect caught in the heart of a fiery-petaled rose. Yet not those melodramatic sunsets alone are beautiful. Even more exquisite, perhaps, are the lagoons, painted in monochrome of greys, with just one touch of pink upon a western cloud, scattered in ripples here and there on the waves below, reminding us that day has passed and evening come. And beautiful again are the calm settings of fair weather, when sea and sky alike are cheerful, and the topmost blades of the lagoon grass, peeping from the shallows, glance like emeralds from the surface. There is no deep stirring of the



spirit in a symphony of light and colour; but purity, peace, and freshness make their way into our hearts.

Of all these afternoon excursions, that to the Lido is most frequent. It has two points for approach. The more distant is the little station of San Nicoletto, at the mouth of the Porto. With an ebb-tide, the water of the lagoon runs past the mulberry gardens of this hamlet like a river. There is here a grove of acacia trees, shadowy and dreamy, above deep grass which even an Italian summer does not wither. The Riva is fairly broad, forming a promenade, where one may conjure up the personages of a century ago. For San Nicoletto used to be a fashionable resort before the other points of Lido had been occupied by pleasure-seekers. An artist even now will select its old-world quiet, leafy shade, and prospect through the islands of Vignole and Sant' Erasmo to snow-touched peaks of Antelao and Tofano, rather than the glare and bustle and extended view of Venice which its rival Sant' Elisabetta offers.

But when we want a plunge into the Adriatic, or a stroll along smooth sands, or a breath of genuine sea-breeze, or a handful of horned poppies from the dunes, or a lazy half-hour's contemplation of a limitless horizon flecked with rus-set sails, then we seek Sant' Elisabetta. Our boat is left at the landing-place. We saunter across the island and back again. Antonio and Francesco wait and order wine, which we drink with them in the shade of the little *osteria's* wall.

A certain afternoon in May I well remember, for this visit to the Lido was marked by one of those apparitions

which are as rare as they are welcome to the artist's soul. I have always held that in our modern life the only real equivalent for the antique mythopœtic sense—that sense which enabled the Hellenic race to figure for themselves the powers of earth and air, streams and forests, and the presiding genii of places, under the forms of living human beings—is supplied by the appearance at some felicitous moment of a man or woman who impersonates for our imagination the essence of the beauty that environs us. It seems, at such a fortunate moment, as though we had been waiting for this revelation, although perchance the want of it had not been previously felt. Our sensations and perceptions test themselves at the touchstone of this living individuality. The keynote of the whole music dimly sounding in our ears is struck. A melody emerges, clear in form and excellent in rhythm. The landscapes we have painted on our brain, no longer lack their central figure. The life proper to the complex conditions we have studied is discovered, and every detail, judged by this standard of vitality, falls into its right relations.

I had been musing long that day and earnestly upon the mystery of the lagoons, their opaline transparencies of air and water, their fretful rising, and sudden subsidence into calm, the treacherousness of their shoals, the sparkle and the splendour of their sunlight. I had asked myself how would a Greek sculptor have personified the elemental deity of these salt-water lakes, so different in quality from the Ægean or Ionian sea? What would he find distinctive of

their spirit? The Tritons of these shallows must be of other form and lineage than the fierce-eyed youth who blows his conch upon the curled crest of a wave, crying aloud to his comrades, as he bears the nymph away to caverns where the billows plunge in tideless instability.

We had picked up shells and looked for sea-horses on the Adriatic shore. Then we returned to give our boatmen wine beneath the vine-clad *pergola*. Four other men were there, drinking and eating from a dish of fried fish set upon the coarse white linen cloth. Two of them soon rose and went away. Of the two who stayed, one was a large, middle-aged man; the other was still young. He was tall and sinewy, but slender, for these Venetians are rarely massive in their strength. Each limb is equally developed by the exercise of rowing upright, bending all the muscles to their stroke. Their bodies are elastically supple, with free sway from the hips and a mercurial poise upon the ankle. Stefano showed these qualities almost in exaggeration. The type in him was refined to its artistic perfection. Moreover, he was rarely in repose, but moved with a singular brusque grace. A black broad-brimmed hat was thrown back upon his matted *zazzera* of dark hair tipped with dusty brown. This shock of hair, cut in flakes, and falling willfully, reminded me of the lagoon grass, when it darkens in autumn upon uncovered shoals, and sunset gilds its sombre edges. Silvery grey eyes beneath it gazed intently, with compulsive effluence of electricity. It was the wild glance of a Triton. Short blonde mustache, dazzling

teeth, skin bronzed, but showing white and healthful through open front and sleeves of lilac shirt. The dashing sparkle of this animate splendour, who looked to me as though the sea-waves and the sun had made him in some hour of secret and unquiet rapture, was somehow emphasised by a curious dint dividing his square chin,—a cleft that harmonised with smile on lip and steady flame in eyes. I hardly know what effect it would have upon a reader to compare his eyes to opals. Yet Stefano's eyes, as they met mine had the vitreous intensity of opals, as if though the colour of Venetian waters were vitalised in them. This noticeable being had a rough hoarse voice which, to develop the parallel with a sea-god, might have screamed in storm or whispered raucous messages from crests of tossing billows.

I felt, as I looked, that here, for me at least, the mytho-poem of the lagoons was humanised; the spirit of the salt-water lakes had appeared to me; the final touch of life emergent from nature had been given. I was satisfied; for I had seen a poem.

## CHIOGGIA

HENRY ECROYD

FROM Chioggia southward, runs the stupendous sea-wall, built by order of the Venetian Republic, to prevent the encroachments of the sea. It is immediately inland of this massive embankment that the most productive eel-grounds are situated. We will describe one with which we are familiar, containing a surface area of 800 acres, lying to the eastward of Ariano, between the mouths of the Po, known respectively as *la bocca di Levante* and *la bocca della Maestra*. This lagoon is sheltered to the eastward by the sea-wall, and upon the other sides by artificial embankments. Between the eastern border and the sea-line a communication is maintained by means of a wide deep pass, about a mile in length, with sluice-gates at either end.

When Christmas approaches and a dark winter's night conjures up the spirit of the storm from out the usually calm and playful Adriatic, then is the time when the eel-gardener and his men await the moment for gathering in their annual crops.

Imagine, if you can, reader, such a night. A stiff sea-breeze blowing (not as in England, a *north-wester*—in the Adriatic and Mediterranean it is the *south-easter* which the mariner most dreads); a murky blackness, throwing even the inky morass into deeper gloom; a wild tempestuous



FISH MARKET IN VENICE





sea foaming and moaning, and lashing in impotent fury the low line of the western coast. At high tide, in the darkness of the night, the flood-gates are opened, and in burst the salt-water waves. Gurgling and heaving, with tumultuous force, onward they flow; perceptibly loud is the noise of their coming, above the sound of the wind or the creaking of the willows. Onward, still onward, the briny water rushes to mingle with the *aqua dolce* of the inward lagoon.

Scarce has the salt stream made half its distance when the lagoon seems instinct with life; its waters seething and boiling, at first low and indistinct, then gradually more stirring and confused, until its surface disgorges myriads of the eely tribe, converging towards the point where the seawater must meet them. With surprising quickness they roll onwards through the rapidly narrowing channel, the noise they make becoming absolutely appalling. Vast balls of intertwined millions choke the course of the stream, and rise high above the surface, as they struggle onward towards the inflowing tide, which, with marvellous instinct, they have scented long before it has made half the distance between them and the open sea. When the water has become thoroughly brackish, wire-work sluice-gates are drawn across the dyke, and the whole produce of the lagoon is concentrated within an area of half an acre of space. Then commences the *take*, as we may term it; day and night relays of men haul out of the water and assort the eels. A large proportion are immediately skinned for salting and pickling, others are shipped off alive in trading vessels

(native and foreign) waiting to receive them, whilst the smaller ones and the breed eels are thrown back into the water.

The process of unravelling the knotted heaps requires great expertness and a sharp knife. While the writer was watching this singular and interesting scene, one of the fishermen, with that quickness of imaginative adaptation which distinguishes the *Pescatore* of the Adriatic, remarked to him: "*Mi pare che questo e un vero Nodo Gordiano!*" A Gordian knot indeed it seemed to be.

*A propos* to the subject: the Venetian fisherman is a rare specimen of his kind; after years spent on board his little fishing-smack, he will suddenly relinquish his seafaring life and turn oyster-hawker (while oysters are in season), and *venditore di sorbetto*, or *roba dolce*, during the other months of the year. Such characters are known familiarly as "Chioggiotti," and wander from town to town, frequenting the *trattoria* and *locanda*, ever ready to bandy jokes or spin a yarn for the amusement of their *avventori*.

These Chioggiotti are the inhabitants of a thickly-populated group of islands, or rather sand-banks, lying south-west of Venice. Chioggia, from which they take their name, is the largest of these islands; it contains about 25,000 inhabitants, and lies adjacent to the mainland. The inhabitants are a people quite distinct from the Venetians, and we incline to regard them as descendants of the Pelasgian or Etrurian races who inhabited the neighbouring districts in pre-Roman days. In their physiognomy, in their costume, and in their

general habits of life, they differ entirely from any other people of the Italian peninsula; the women are remarkable for their well-developed forms and commanding features, betokening robust and healthy physical organisation, and their costume is strikingly picturesque; whilst the men are sober, frugal, and industrious, occupying themselves in fishing and market-gardening. Each family estimates its wealth by the number of its fishing-smacks and the extent of the *campi* it has under potato, cauliflower, and asparagus culture.

The grand sight in Chioggia is its fish-market, a sight unique of its kind in Europe. From the time the sale of fish commences, the scene is one of the most animated imaginable, if we can call *that* animation the peculiar characteristic of which is *silence*. Each fishing-smack as it arrives off the port transfers its cargo to a canoe-tender, which swiftly threads the watery pathway, and shoots alongside the *riviera della Pescheria*. The fish is carried from the boat by the *facchini della Piazza*, and assorted upon marble slabs—the small fish in heaps, the large fish side by side; the auctioneer, having attached a number to each lot, and entered them in his book, is ready to receive the bids of the intending purchasers, who are willing to take them to the different inland markets. The whole proceeding now assumes an air of indescribable mystery to the uninitiated stranger: in the midst of a dream-like silence dealer after dealer steps up to the auctioneer, whispers in his ear the price he is willing to give for each lot as it is announced, and then retires. When all have ap-

parently whispered their bid, and a last pantomimic appeal for yet another offer has been made, the name of the highest bidder and the price he has offered is noted in the book. As lot after lot is thus disposed of, the auctioneer scribbles a duplicate card, and throws it to a deputy, who announces the purchaser to whom it has been assigned.

Boat-load after boat-load arrives, and is disposed of by silent auction, without a word being spoken audibly by either auctioneer or bidder, and with a celerity perfectly surprising; thus fish to the value of thousands of florins are daily distributed amongst the Lombardo-Venetian markets, which are dependent upon this singular and isolated community for their supply of fish, oysters, and other *frutto del mare*, as well as for the first choice vegetables of the season. We have eaten many varieties of fish in Chioggia which are unknown west of the Straits of Gibraltar, and are probably even rarely met with except in the immediate vicinity of the Venetian lagoons.

## MURANO

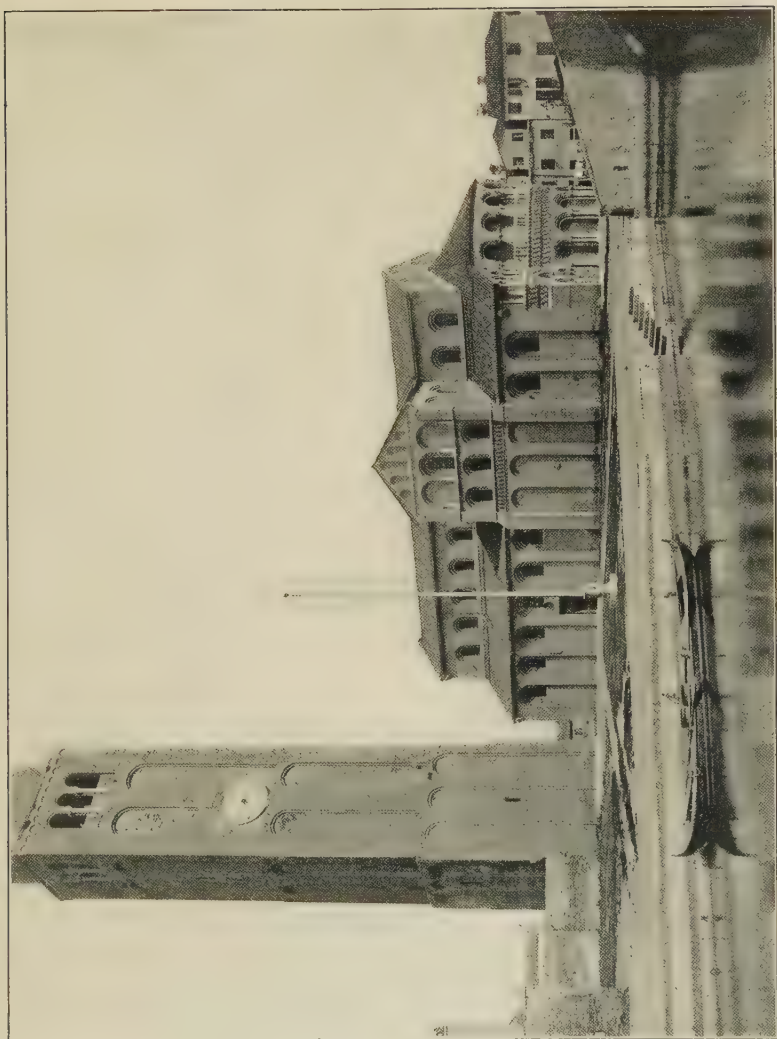
JOHN RUSKIN

**B**UT it is morning now: we have a hard day's work to do at Murano, and our boat shoots swiftly from beneath the last bridge of Venice, and brings us out into the open sea and sky.

The pure cumuli of cloud lie crowded and leaning against one another, rank beyond rank, far over the shining water, each cut away at its foundation by a level line, trenchant and clear, till they sink to the horizon like a flight of marble steps, except where the mountains meet them, and are lost in them, barred across by the grey terraces of those cloud foundations, and reduced into one crestless bank of blue, spotted here and there with strange flakes of wan, ærial, greenish light, strewed upon them like snow. And underneath is the long dark line of the mainland, fringed with low trees; and then the wide-waving surface of the burnished lagoon trembling slowly, and shaking out into forked bands of lengthening light the images of the towers of cloud above. To the north, there is first the great cemetery wall, then the long stray buildings of Murano, and the island villages beyond, glittering in intense crystalline vermilion, like so much jewellery scattered on a mirror, their towers poised apparently in the air a little above the horizon, and their reflections, as sharp and vivid and substantial as themselves, thrown on the vacancy between them and the sea.

And thus the villages seem standing on the air; and to the east, there is a cluster of ships that seem sailing on the land; for the sandy line of the Lido stretches itself between us and them, and we can see the tall white sails moving beyond it, but not the sea, only there is a sense of the great sea being indeed there, and a solemn strength of gleaming light in sky above.

The most discordant feature in the whole scene is the cloud which hovers above the glass furnaces of Murano; but this we may not regret, as it is one of the last signs left of human exertion among the ruinous villages which surround us. The silent gliding of the gondola brings it nearer to us every moment; we pass the cemetery, and a deep sea-channel which separates it from Murano, and finally enter a narrow water-street, with a paved footpath on each side, raised three or four feet above the canal, and forming a kind of quay between the water and the doors of the houses. These latter are, for the most part low, but built with massy doors and windows of marble or Istrian stone, square set, and barred with iron; buildings evidently once of no mean order, though now inhabited only by the poor. Here and there an ogee window of the Fourteenth Century, or a doorway deeply enriched with cable mouldings, shows itself in the midst of more ordinary features; and several houses, consisting of one story only carried on square pillars, forming a short arcade along the quay, have windows sustained on shafts of red Verona marble, of singular grace and delicacy. All now in vain: little care is there for their delicacy or



SAN DONATO, ITALY.





grace among the rough fishermen sauntering on the quay, with their jackets hanging loose from their shoulder, jacket, cap and hair all of the same dark-greenish sea-grey. But there is some life in the scene, more than is usual in Venice: the women are sitting at their doors knitting busily, and various workmen of the glass-houses sifting glass dust upon the pavement, and strange cries coming from one side of the canal to the other, and ringing far along the crowded water, from venders of figs and grapes, and gourds and shell-fish; cries partly descriptive of the eatables in question, but interspersed with others of a character unintelligible in proportion to their violence, and fortunately so if we may judge by a sentence which is stencilled in black within a garland, on the whitewashed walls of nearly every other house in the street, but which, how often soever written no one seems to regard: "*Bestemme non più. Lodate Gesù.*"

We push our way on between large barges laden with fresh water from Fusina, in round white tubs, seven feet across, and complicated boats full of all manner of nets that look as if they could never be disentangled, hanging from their masts and over their sides; and presently pass under a bridge with the lion of St. Mark's on its archivolt, and another on a pillar at the end of a parapet, a small red lion with much of the puppy in his face, looking vacantly up in the air (in passing we may note that, instead of feathers, his wings are covered with hair, and in several other points the manner of his sculpture is not uninteresting). Presently the canal turns a little to the left, and thereupon becomes

in a dream showed him, covered with lilies, that very triangular field on which we were but now standing, amidst the ragged weeds and shattered pavement. The emperor obeyed the vision; and the church was consecrated on the 15th of August, 957.

Whatever degree of credence we may feel disposed to attach to this piece of history, there is no question that a church was built on this spot before the close of the Tenth Century: since the year 999 we find the incumbent of the Basilica (note this word, it is of some importance), di Santa Maria Plebania di Murano taking an oath of obedience to the Bishop of the Altinat church, and engaging at the same time to give the said bishop his dinner on the Domenica in Albis, when the prelate held a confirmation in the mother church, as it was then commonly called of Murano. From this period, for more than a century, I can find no records of any alterations made in the fabric of the church, but there exist very full details of the quarrels which arose between its incumbents and those of San Stefano, San Cipriano, San Salvatore, and the other churches of Murano, touching the due obedience which their less numerous or less ancient brotherhoods owed to St. Mary's.

These differences seem to have been renewed at the election of every new abbot by each of the fraternities, and must have been growing serious when the Patriarch of Grado, Henry Dandolo, interfered in 1102, and in order to seal a peace between the two principal opponents, ordered that the abbot of St. Stephen's should be present at the service in St. Mary's

on the night of the Epiphany, and that the abbot of St. Mary's should visit him of St. Stephen's on St. Stephen's day; and that then the two abbots "should eat apples and drink good wine together, in peace and charity."<sup>1</sup>

But even this kindly effort seems to have been without result; the irritated pride of the antagonists remained unsoothed by the love-feast of St. Stephen's day; and the breach continued to widen until the abbot of St. Mary's obtained a timely accession to his authority in the year 1125. The Doge Domenico Michele, having in the Second Crusade secured such substantial advantages for the Venetians as might well counterbalance the loss of part of their trade with the East, crowned his successes by obtaining possession in Cephalonia of the body of San Donato, bishop of Eurœa; which treasure he having presented on his return to the Murano basilica, that church was thenceforward called the church of Sts. Mary and Donato. Nor was the body of the saint its only acquisition: St. Donato's principal achievement had been the destruction of a terrible dragon in Epirus; Michele brought home the bones of the dragon as well as of the saint; the latter were put in a marble sarcophagus, and the former hung up over the high altar.

But the clergy of St. Stefano were indomitable. At the very moment when their adversaries had received this formidable accession of strength, they had the audacity "*ad onta*

<sup>1</sup> Perhaps in the choice of the abbot's cheer, there was some occult reference to the verse of Solomon's Song: "Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples."

*de replicati giuramenti, e dell' inveterata consuetudine,"* to refuse to continue in the obedience which they had vowed to their mother church. The matter was tried in a provincial council; the votaries of St. Stephen were condemned, and remained quiet for about twenty years, in wholesome dread of the authority conferred on the abbot of St. Donato, by the Pope's legate, to suspend any of the clergy of the island from their office if they refused submission. In 1172, however, they appealed to Pope Alexander III., and were condemned again: and we find the struggle renewed at every promising opportunity, during the course of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries; until, at last, finding St. Donato and the dragon together too strong for him, the abbot of St. Stefano "discovered" in his church the bodies of two hundred martyrs at once!—a discovery, it is to be remembered, in some sort equivalent to those days to that of California in ours. The inscription, however, on the façade of the church recorded it with quiet dignity:—"MCCCLXXIV. a di XIV., di Aprile. Furono trovati nella presente chiesa del protomartire San Stefano, duecento e più corpi de' Santi Martiri, dal Ven. Prete Matteo Fradello provano della chiesa."<sup>1</sup> Corner, who gives this inscription, which no longer exists, goes on to explain with infinite gravity, that the bodies in question, "being of infantile form and stature, are reported by

<sup>1</sup> On the 14th day of April, 1374, there were found, in this church of the first martyr, St. Stefano, two hundred and more bodies of holy martyrs, by the venerable priest, Matthew Fradello, incumbent of this church.

tradition to have belonged to those fortunate innocents who suffered martyrdom under King Herod; but that when, or by whom, the church was enriched with so vast a treasure, is not manifested by any document."

The issue of the struggle is not to our present purpose. We have already arrived at the Fourteenth Century, without finding record of any effort made by the clergy of St. Mary's to maintain their influence by restoring or beautifying their basilica; which is the only point at present of importance to us. That great alterations were made in it at the time of the acquisition of the body of St. Donato is, however, highly probable, the mosaic pavement of the interior, which bears its date 1140, being probably the last of the additions. I believe that no part of the ancient church can be shown to be of more recent date than this; and I shall not occupy the reader's time by any inquiry respecting the epochs or authors of the destructive modern restorations; the wreck of the old fabric, breaking out from beneath them here and there, is generally distinguishable from them at a glance; and it is enough for the reader to know that none of these truly ancient fragments can be assigned to a more recent date than 1140, and that some of them may with probability be looked upon as remains of the shell of the first church erected in the course of the latter half of the Tenth Century.

It is roofed by a concha, or semi-dome; and the external arrangement of its walls provides for the security of this dome by what is, in fact, a system of buttresses as effective and definite as that of any of the northern churches, although

the buttresses are obtained entirely by adaptations of the Roman shaft and arch, the lower story being formed by a thick mass of wall lightened by ordinary semicircular round-headed niches, like those used so extensively afterwards in Renaissance architecture, each niche flanked by a pair of shafts standing clear of the wall and bearing deeply moulded arches thrown over the niche. The wall with its pillars thus forms a series of massy buttresses, on the top of which is an open gallery, backed by a thinner wall, and roofed by arches whose shafts are set above the pairs of shafts below. On the heads of these arches rests the roof. We have, therefore, externally a heptagonal apse, chiefly of rough and common brick, only with marble shafts and a few marble ornaments; but for that reason all the more interesting, because it shows us what may be done, and what was done, with materials such as are now at our own command; and because in its proportions, and in the use of the few ornaments it possesses, it displays a delicacy of feeling rendered doubly notable by the roughness of the work in which laws so subtle are observed, and with which so thoughtful ornamentation is associated.

We must now see what is left of interest within the walls.

All hope is taken away by our first glance; for it falls on a range of shafts whose bases are concealed by wooden panelling, and which sustains arches decorated in the most approved style of Renaissance upholstery, with stucco roses in squares under the soffits, and egg and arrow mouldings on the architraves, gilded, on a ground of spotty black and



green, with a small pink-faced and black-eyed cherub on every keystone; the rest of the church being for the most part concealed either by dirty hangings, or dirtier whitewash, or dim pictures on warped and wasting canvas; all vulgar, vain, and foul. Yet let us not turn back, for in the shadow of the apse our more careful glance shows us a Greek Madonna, pictured on a field of gold; and we feel giddy at the first step we make on the pavement, for it, also, is of Greek mosaic, waved like the sea and dyed like a dove's neck.

Nor are the original features of the rest of the edifice altogether indecipherable; the entire series of shafts marked in the ground plan on each side of the nave from the western entrance to the apse, are nearly uninjured; and I believe the stilted arches they sustain are those of the original fabric, though the masonry is covered by the Renaissance stucco mouldings. Their capitals, for a wonder, are left bare, and appear to have sustained no farther injury than has resulted from the insertion of a large brass chandelier into each of their abaci, each chandelier carrying a sublime wax candle two inches thick, fastened with wire to the wall above. The due arrangements of these appendages, previous to festa days, can only be effected from a ladder set against the angle of the abacus; and ten minutes before I wrote this sentence, I had the privilege of watching the candle-lighter at his work, knocking his ladder about the heads of the capitals as if they had given him personal offence. He at last succeeded in breaking away one of the lamps altogether, with a bit of the marble of the abacus; the whole falling in

ruin to the pavement, and causing much consultation and clamour among a tribe of beggars who were assisting the sacristan with their wisdom respecting the festal arrangements.

It is fortunate that the capitals themselves, being somewhat rudely cut, can bear this kind of treatment better than most of those in Venice. They are all founded on the Corinthian type, but the leaves are in every one different; those of the easternmost capital of the southern range are the best, and very beautiful, but presenting no feature of much interest, their workmanship being inferior to most of the imitations of Corinthian common at the period; much more to the rich fantasies which we have seen at Torcello. The apse itself to-day (12th September, 1851), is not to be described; for just in front of it, behind the altar, is a magnificent curtain of a new red velvet with a gilt edge and two golden tassels, held up in a dainty manner by two angels in the upholsterer's service; and above all, for concentration of effect a star or sun, some five feet broad, the spikes of which conceal the whole of the figure of the Madonna except the head and hands.

The pavement is however still left open, and it is of infinite interest, although grievously distorted and defaced. For whenever a new chapel has been built, or a new altar erected the pavement has been broken up and readjusted so as to surround the newly inserted steps or stones with some appearance of symmetry; portions of it either carved or carried away, others mercilessly shattered or replaced by

modern imitations, and those of very different periods, with pieces of the old floor left here and there in the midst of them, and worked round so as to deceive the eye into acceptance of the whole as ancient. The portion, however, which occupies the western extremity of the nave, and the parts immediately adjoining it in the aisles, are, I believe, in their original positions, and very little injured: they are composed chiefly of groups of peacocks, lions, stags, and griffins,—two of each in a group, drinking out of the same vase, or shaking claws together,—enclosed by interlacing bands, and alternating with chequer or star patterns, and here and there an attempt at representation of architecture, all worked in marble mosaic. The floors of Torcello and of St. Mark's are executed in the same manner; but what remains at Murano is finer than either, in the extraordinary play of colour obtained by the use of variegated marbles. At St. Mark's the patterns are more intricate, and the pieces far more skilfully set together; but each piece is there commonly of one colour: at Murano every fragment is itself variegated, and all are arranged with a skill and feeling not to be taught, and to be observed with deep reverence, for that pavement is not dateless, like the rest of the church; it bears its date on one of its central circles, 1140, and is, in my mind, one of the most precious monuments in Italy, showing thus early, and in those rude chequers which the bared knee of the Murano fisher wears in its daily bending, the beginning of that mighty spirit of Venetian colour, which was to be consummated in Titian.

## ST. FRANCIS IN THE DESERT

LINDA VILLARI

FAR away in the north-eastern lagoon lies the unfrequented islet of San Francisco nel Deserto, with its lonely monastery belted with cypresses to shield it from winter blasts, and with a solitary stone-pine set like a watch-tower at its southern corner towards Venice.

This northern lagoon is of sterner beauty than the crowded water to the south. Far away to the left it is bordered by a narrow strip of plain, backed by the mountain ranges of Friuli and Cadore. These sweep round its waters in noble lines and curves, broken here and there by shadowy peaks. On very clear days the soaring mass of the Pelmo and the snows of Mont' Antelao are distinctly visible; and the aged Titian in his fine palace near the Fondamenta Nuove must have often cast wistful glances towards the giant guardians of his boyhood's home. To the right lie numerous verdant islets like loosely-strung emeralds, and the towers and domes of Murano do not long shut out the view of those of Mazzorbo and Burano, overtopped by the taller belfry of Torcello behind. The one repellant feature of the lagoon is the unsightly blank wall of the burial-ground of San Michele. "So small an island," cries our boatman, "and yet it can hold all Venice!" But why need this place of rest wear the aspect of a dungeon for the dead? Must a *memento mori*



SANTA FOSCA, TORCELLO



be inevitably as hideous as the death's head of a penitent's cell?

At low tide the shallows about Murano shine like burnished mirrors; forests of weed wave unceasingly to and fro beneath their clear surface, and the green blades are studded with the little pearl shells that, when polished, are woven into the well-known trinkets that fill so many shop-fronts at St. Mark's.

On the day of our voyage to San Francesco, we ran aground among these shells; for while the veteran rowers of our companion gondola chose the circuitous route by the channel posts, our more daring Antonio attempted a short cut. He had never run aground, he said, and seemed convinced that his gondola could float in a tumbler-depth of water. But the waving weeds came nearer and nearer to the surface, we struck midway; and Antonio and his handsome mate—the ideal of a stage brigand—had to turn out into the shallows and shove and tug for many minutes before we are again afloat. It was ignominious to have to go round by the channel after all, and be received with broad grins and mild jeers by the cautious rowers of the other boat. But Antonio laughed good-humouredly, shook his curls, and, spreading his sail to the breeze, took us across the lagoon at a grand pace, far ahead of our friends. Past the forlorn islets where gunpowder is stored, and where forlorn sentinels watched our flight with wistful eyes; past huge rafts, long and sinuous as sea-serpents, with little huts upon them, and patches of moss and lichen that spoke to us of the Tyro-



lese forests, whence they had been torn. Presently our course changed, our sail flapped, and leaving the huddled houses and factories of Burano to the left, we made straight for the ruddy tower of San Francesco nel Deserto. It is no uncheerful desert at this season, though doubtless dreary enough in winter storms and fogs. For its southern windows look over to Venice, and, through the summer haze, walls, towers and domes are faintly seen—vague and unsubstantial as a city of air. Far away to the west stretches the soft green line of the mainland, only broken by a few slender bell-towers, mere black lines against the thick cloud-curtains now veiling the mountain world behind. Grasslands and belts of foliage close in the view to the east.

A narrow causeway through a slip of meadow brings us to the convent porch, where a hale and portly Franciscan bids us a hearty welcome. But we defer our visit to the church; our first duty being clearly to make tea for our thirsty guests. By a gate bowered with flowering oleanders, we enter an orchard close where the gnarled and stunted trees are knee-deep in grass. We wade through it to the encircling dyke and its double row of cypresses; and having found a sheltered shrine for our spirit-lamp, revel in the wonderful view. Our artist-friends seize their sketch-books, forgetting both hunger and thirst, for there are subjects on all sides. Fantastic interchange of land and water formed by the scattered weed-flats and flowery meadows; the long shadows of the cypress trees, the ruddy tower and rounded chancel of the Lombard Church, the fan-shaped

## ST. FRANCIS IN THE DESERT 359

chimneys and irregular roof-lines of the straggling convent, the tender tints of the lagoon, and, best of all, the visionary city rising from the sea to the south. The beacon pine-tree is invisible from this side, and, being within the convent garden, may not be approached by female feet.

Time passes quickly; the sun is low. We seek our smiling friar and hasten into the church. It is a dim and shadowy interior at this hour, and little of the clear evening light finds its way through the narrow windows. Behind a grating near the high altar, we are shown San Francesco's rock-hewn cell, containing a life-size effigy of the saint. We are puzzled by the geological anomaly of a rocky cave on a sandy isle; but perhaps San Francesco brought it with him from Assisi. On turning into the choir, our irreverence was checked by the apparition of a similar figure, equally emaciated and rigid, seated in the darkest corner of the church. This, however, was a living monk wrapt in prayer, and apparently unconscious of our intruding presence. Another haggard form slowly emerged from the shadows and disappeared through the doorway. It was reassuring to glance at our stout Franciscan—there was nothing ghostly about him—and to follow his substantial tread into the outer court. Here there was nothing to attract the eye, but through a corner door we were allowed a glimpse of the inner cloister with delicate twisted columns, and a fine sculptured well surrounded by radiant beds of carnations and gladioli. Our jovial guide seemed justly proud of his flowers, and instantly bustled in to pick us a handful. He

told us that the brethren were twenty in number, but this may have been a pious fiction in honour of his patron saint, for our gondoliers who had frequently entered the convent, assured us there were only eight. Of course by law the community is suppressed, but the law cannot prevent the purchase of the building by some private individual who brings friends to live with him, and chooses to dress in brown woollen robes. Of course, too, by law there is no *clausura*.

Once, a lady artist, burning to see some famous picture buried in an Italian monastery, presented herself at its gate, and urged her legal right. The case was submitted to the Superior, who blandly acknowledged that the law of the land entitled her to enter; but added, that as by the rules of the Church cloistered ground was desecrated by woman's step, he was sure she would kindly submit to be carried in by her coachman. The lady went away without seeing the picture.

But now the distant lines of spires and domes, the arsenal walls and soaring tower of San Francesco della Vigna, stood out darkly against the glow of the great red sun; and the thickening storm-clouds over Burano reminded us that seven miles of water lay between us and our home. We raced the storm and won; for although its ragged edges threatened to descend upon us, though thunder growled and lightning flashed, a sudden wind presently arose and drove it away to the north. It was high tide by this time, and there was much traffic on the lagoon. Painted sails were flitting in all

## ST. FRANCIS IN THE DESERT 361

directions; we passed many Rialto-bound fruit boats and crawling barges with nondescript cargoes, and each and all added to the charm of the scene. We met a fat Franciscan returning to his cloister from a day of business—or perhaps pleasure—in Venice. He sat enthroned on a chair in a tiny *sandalo*, was sipping some cordial from a case-bottle, and gave us a very spiteful glance as we exclaimed at his pictorial value.

Reaching the Fondamenta Nuova just as the lamps were lighted, we shot through the city at a splendid pace, and found all the gay world assembling to hear the band at St. Mark's. The stir and animation of the southern lagoon was almost bewildering in contrast with the silent waters behind us, with the cypress-girdled isle in their midst.

## TORCELLO

JOHN RUSKIN

**S** EVEN miles to the north of Venice the banks of sand, which near the city rise little above low-water mark, attain by degrees a higher level, and knit themselves at last into fields of salt morass, raised here and there into shapeless mounds, and intercepted by narrow creeks of sea. One of the feeblest of these inlets, after winding for some time among buried fragments of masonry, and knots of sun-burnt weeds whitened with webs of fucus, stays itself in an utterly stagnant pool beside a plot of greener grass covered with ground ivy and violets. On this mound is built a rude brick campanile, of the commonest Lombardic type, which if we ascend towards evening (and there are none to hinder us, the door of its ruinous staircase swinging idly on its hinges), we may command from it one of the most notable scenes in this wide world of ours. Far as the eye can reach, a waste of wild sea moor, of a lurid ashen grey; not like our northern moors with their jet-black pools and purple heath, but lifeless, the colour of sackcloth, with corrupted seawater soaking through the roots of its acrid weeds, and gleaming hither and thither through its snaky channels. No gathering of fantastic mists, nor coursing of clouds across it; but melancholy clearness of space in the warm sunset, oppressive, reaching to the horizon of its level gloom. To



INTERIOR OF SANTA FOSCA, TORCELLO





the very horizon, on the north-east; but, to the north and west, there is a blue line of higher land along the border of it, and above this, but farther back, a misty band of mountains, touched with snow. To the east, the paleness and roar of the Adriatic, louder at momentary intervals as the surf breaks on the bars of sand; to the south, the widening branches of the calm lagoon, alternately purple and pale green, as they reflect the evening clouds or twilight sky; and almost beneath our feet, on the same field which sustains the tower we gaze from, a group of four buildings, two of them little larger than cottages (though built of stone, and one adorned by a quaint belfry), the third, an octagonal chapel, of which we can see but little more than the flat red roof with its rayed tiling, the fourth, a considerable church with nave and aisles, but of which, in like manner, we can see little but the long central ridge and lateral slopes of roof, which the sunlight separates in one glowing mass from the green field beneath and grey moor beyond. There are no living creatures near the buildings, nor any vestige of village or city round about them. They lie like a little company of ships becalmed on a far-away sea.

Then look farther to the south. Beyond the widening branches of the lagoon, and rising out of the bright lake into which they gather, there are a multitude of towers, dark, and scattered among square-set shapes of clustered palaces, a long and irregular line fretting the southern sky.

Mother and daughter, you behold them both in their widowhood,—Torcello, and Venice.

Thirteen hundred years ago, the grey moorland looked as it does this day, and the purple mountains stood as radiantly in the deep distances of evening; but on the line of the horizon, there were strange fires mixed with the light of sunset, and the lament of many human voices mixed with the fretting of the waves on their ridges of sand. The flames rose from the ruins of Altinum; the lament from the multitude of its people, seeking, like Israel of old, a refuge from the sword in the paths of the sea.

The cattle are feeding and resting upon the site of the city that they left; the mower's scythe swept this day at dawn over the chief street of the city that they built, and the swathes of soft grass are now sending up their scent into the night air, the only incense that fills the temple of their ancient worship. Let us go down into that little space of meadow land.

The inlet which runs nearest to the base of the campanile is not that by which Torcello is commonly approached. Another, somewhat broader, and overhung by alder copse, winds out of the main channel of the lagoon up to the very edge of the little meadow which was once the Piazza of the city, and there, stayed by a few grey stones which present some semblance of a quay, forms its boundary at one extremity. Hardly larger than an ordinary English farmyard, and roughly enclosed on each side by broken palings and hedges of honeysuckle and briar, the narrow field retires from the water's edge, traversed by a scarcely traceable footpath, for some forty or fifty paces, and then expanding into the form of

a small square, with buildings on three sides of it, the fourth being that which opens to the water. Two of these, that on our left and that in front of us as we approached from the canal, are so small that they might well be taken for the out-houses of the farm, though the first is a conventual building, and the other aspires to the title "Palazzo pubblico," both dating as far back as the beginning of the Fourteenth Century; the third, the octagonal church of Santa Fosca, is far more ancient than either, yet hardly on a larger scale. Though the pillars of the portico which surrounds it are of pure Greek marble, and their capitals are enriched with delicate sculpture, they, and the arches they sustain, together only raise the roof to the height of a cattle-shed; and the first strong impression which the spectator receives from the whole scene is, that whatever sin it may have been which has on this spot been visited with so utter a desolation, it could not at least have been ambition. Nor will this impression be diminished as we approach, or enter, the larger church to which the whole group of buildings is subordinate. It has evidently been built by men in flight and distress, who sought in the hurried erection of their island church such a shelter for their earnest and sorrowful worship, as, on the one hand, could not attract the eyes of their enemies by its splendour, and yet, on the other, might not awaken too bitter feelings by its contrast with the churches which they had seen destroyed. There is visible everywhere a simple and tender effort to recover some of the form of the temples which they had loved, and to do honour to God by that which they were

erecting, while distress and humiliation prevented the desire, and prudence precluded the admission, either of luxury of ornament or magnificence of plan. The exterior is absolutely devoid of decoration, with the exception only of the western entrance and the lateral door, of which the former has carved sideposts and architrave, and the latter, crosses of rich sculpture; while the mossy stone shutters of the windows, turning on huge rings of stone, which answer the double purpose of stanchions and brackets, cause the whole building rather to resemble a refuge from the Alpine storm than the cathedral of a populous city; and, internally, the two column mosaics of the eastern and western extremities,—one representing the Last Judgment, the other the Madonna, her tears falling as her hands are raised to bless,—and the noble range of pillars which enclose the space between, terminated by the high throne for the pastor and the semicircular raised seats for the superior clergy, are expressive at once of the deep sorrow and the sacred courage of men who had no home left them upon earth, but who looked for one to come, of men “persecuted but not forsaken, cast down but not destroyed.”

I am not aware of any other early church in Italy which has this peculiar expression in so marked a degree; and it is so consistent with all that Christian architecture ought to express in every age (for the actual condition of the exiles who built the Cathedral of Torcello is exactly typical of the spiritual condition which every Christian ought to recognise in himself, a state of homelessness on earth, except so far as he can make the Most High his habitation), that I would

rather fix the mind of the reader on this general character than on the separate details, however interesting, of the architecture itself.

It is not, however, to be expected that either the mute language of early Christianity (however important a part of the expression of the building at the time of its erection), or the delicate fancies of the Gothic leafage springing into new life, should be read, or perceived, by the passing traveller who has never been taught to expect anything in architecture except Five Orders: yet he can hardly fail to be struck by the simplicity and dignity of the great shafts themselves; by the frank diffusion of light, which prevents their severity from becoming oppressive; by the delicate forms and lovely carving of the pulpit and chancel screen; and, above all, by the peculiar aspect of the eastern extremity of the church, which, instead of being withdrawn, as in later cathedrals, into a chapel dedicated to the Virgin, or contributing by the brilliancy of its windows to the splendour of the altar, and theatrical effect of the ceremonies performed there, is a simple and stern semicircular recess, filled beneath by three ranks of seats, raised one above the other, for the bishop and presbyters, that they might watch as well as guide the devotions of the people, and discharge literally in the daily service the functions of bishops or *overseers* of the flock of God.

Let us consider a little each of these characters in succession; and first (for of the shafts enough has been said already), what is very peculiar to the church, its luminousness. This perhaps strikes the traveller more from its con-

trast with the excessive gloom of the Church of St. Mark's; but it is remarkable when we compare the Cathedral of Torcello with any of the contemporary basilicas in South Italy or Lombardic churches in the North. St. Ambrogio at Milan, St. Michele at Pavia, St. Zeno at Verona, St. Frediano at Lucca, St. Miniato at Florence, are all like sepulchral caverns compared with Torcello, where the slightest details of the sculptures and mosaics are visible, even when twilight is deepening. And there is something especially touching in our finding the sunshine thus freely admitted into a church built by men in sorrow. They did not need the darkness; they could not perhaps bear it. There was fear and depression upon them enough, without a material gloom. They sought for comfort in their religion, for tangible hopes and promises, not for threatenings or mysteries; and though the subjects chosen for the mosaics on the walls are of the most solemn character, there are no artificial shadows cast upon them, nor dark colours used in them: all is fair and bright, and intended evidently to be regarded in hopefulness, and not with terror.

Nor were the strength and elasticity of their minds, even in the least matters, diminished by thus looking forward to the close of all things. On the contrary, nothing is more remarkable than the finish and beauty of all the portions of the buildings, which seem to have been actually executed for the place they occupy in the present structure. The rudest are those which they brought with them from the mainland; the best and most beautiful those which appear to have been



carved for their island church: of these, the new capitals and the exquisite panel ornaments of the chancel screen, are the most conspicuous; the latter form a low wall across the church between six small shafts and serve to enclose a space raised two steps above the level of the nave, destined for the singers. The bas-reliefs on this low screen are groups of peacocks and lions, two face to face on each panel, rich and fantastic beyond description, though not expressive of very accurate knowledge either of leonine or pavonine forms. And it is not until we pass to the back of the stair of the pulpit, which is connected with the northern extremity of this screen that we find evidence of the haste with which the church was constructed.

The pulpit, however, is not among the least noticeable of its features. It is sustained on four small detached shafts between the two pillars at the north side of the screen; both pillars and pulpit studiously plain, while the staircase which ascends to it is a compact mass of masonry faced by carved slabs of marble; the parapet of the staircase being also formed of solid blocks like paving-stones, lightened by rich, but not deep exterior carving.

It appears however questionable in the present instance, whether, if the marbles had not been carved to his hand, the architect would have taken the trouble to enrich them. For the execution of the rest of the pulpit is studiously simple, and it is in this respect that its design possesses, it seems to me, an interest to the religious spectator greater than he will take in any other portion of the building. It is supported, as I



said, on a group of four slender shafts; itself of a slightly oval form, extending nearly from one pillar of the nave to the next, so as to give the preacher full room for the action of the entire person, which always gives an unaffected impressiveness to the eloquence of southern nations. In the centre of its curved front, a small bracket and detached shaft sustain the projection of a narrow marble desk (occupying the place of a cushion in a modern pulpit), which is hollowed out into a shallow curve on the upper surface, leaving a ledge at the bottom of the slab, so that a book laid upon it, or rather into it, settles itself there, opening as if by instinct, but without the least chance of slipping to the side, or in any way moving beneath the preacher's hands. Six balls, or rather almonds of purple marble veined with white are set round the edges of the pulpit, and form its only decoration. Perfectly graceful, but severe and almost cold in its simplicity, built for permanence and service, so that no single member, no stone of it, could be spared, and yet all are firm and uninjured as when they were first set together, it stands in venerable contrast both with the fantastic pulpits of mediæval cathedrals and with the rich furniture of those of our modern churches.

But the severity which is so marked in the pulpit at Torcello is still more striking in the raised seats and episcopal throne which occupy the curve of the apse. The arrangement at first somewhat recalls to the mind that of the Roman amphitheatres; the flight of steps which lead up to the central throne divides the curve of the continuous steps or

seats (it appears in the first three ranges questionable which were intended, for they seem too high for one, and too low and close for the other), exactly as in an amphitheatre the stairs for access intersect the sweeping ranges of seats. But in the very rudeness of this arrangement, and especially in the want of all appliances for comfort (for the whole is of marble, and the arms of the central throne are not for convenience, but for distinction and to separate it more conspicuously from the individual seats), there is a dignity which no furniture of stalls nor carving of canopies ever could attain, and well worth the contemplation of the Protestant, both as sternly significative of an episcopal authority which in the early days of the Church was never disputed, and as dependent for all its impressiveness on the utter absence of any expression either of pride or self-indulgence.

But there is one more circumstance which we ought to remember as giving peculiar significance to the position which the episcopal throne occupies in this island church, namely, that in the minds of all early Christians the Church itself was most frequently symbolised under the image of a ship, of which the bishop was the pilot. Consider the force which this symbol would assume in the imaginations of men to whom the spiritual Church had become an ark of refuge in the midst of a destruction hardly less terrible than that from which the eight souls were saved of old, a destruction in which the wrath of man had become as broad as the earth and as merciless as the sea, and who saw the actual and literal edifice of the Church raised up, itself like an ark in the midst of the

waters. No marvel if with the surf of the Adriatic rolling between them and the shores of their birth, from which they were separated for ever, they should have looked upon each other as the disciples did when the storm came down on the Tiberias Lake, and have yielded ready and loving obedience to those who ruled them in His name, who had there rebuked the winds and commanded stillness to the sea. And if the stranger would yet learn in what spirit it was that the dominion of Venice was begun, and in what strength she went forth conquering and to conquer, let him not seek to estimate the wealth of her arsenals or number of her armies, nor look upon the pageantry of her palaces, nor enter into the secrets of her councils; but let him ascend the highest tier of the stern ledges that sweep round the altar of Torcello, and then, looking as the pilot did of old along the marble ribs of the goodly temple-ship, let him repeople its veined deck with the shadows of its dead mariners, and strive to feel in himself the strength of heart that was kindled within them, when first, after the pillars of it had settled in the sand, and the roof of it had been closed against the angry sky that was still reddened by the fires of their homesteads,—first, within the shelter of its knitted walls, amidst the murmur of the waste of waves and the beating of the wings of the sea-birds around the rock that was strange to them,—rose that ancient hymn, in the power of their gathered voices:

“The Sea is His and He made it:  
And His hands prepared the dry land.”











8195  
160 net

57

DG  
674  
.56

674  
.56

Venice as seen and described by  
famous writers.

DATE	ISSUED TO
OCT 17 1972	<i>W. Kreis</i>
APR 24 1978	<i>Beck</i>
MAY 10	<i>Carl</i>
NOV 4	

29267

